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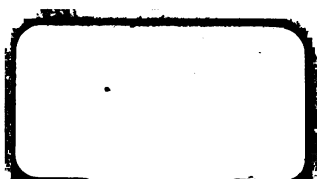
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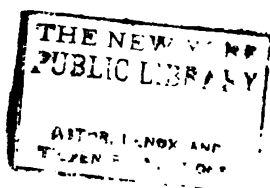


The young lady of pleasure ...

Augustus F Kinnersley, American Tract Society



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OF
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False Pleasure from abroad her joys imports ;
Rich from within, and self-sustained, the true.

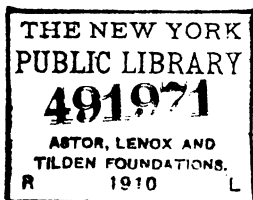
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THE YOUNG LADY OF PLEASURE.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR MISS STANLEY:

ONCE more an inmate of my own home, and happy in the society of beloved parents, brothers, and sisters, it is an additional pleasure that I may still have intercourse with the dear teacher who for these many years has watched over me with a mother's love. The intimation given at our parting that you would correspond with your absent pupil, was, I assure you, a favor which I much desired; yet knowing so well your many duties, it was altogether unexpected. Very few, I am sure, could hope to participate in this privilege, and I feel unworthy of being thus distinguished.

I know that you love to follow your children to their far-off homes, and in imagination to share in the gladness of the first meeting,

and the sweet interchange of affection with the dear friends from whom they have been long separated. It caused a great movement, I assure you, in this quiet domain when your Maria was restored to the embrace of these loved ones. Every one seemed to have been on the tiptoe of expectation, and from grandma down to little Jessie, to have something for sister that would make her feel how welcome was her return. Such a cordial greeting quite repays one for the pain of absence; and then it is delightful to be again associated with those who are so near and dear.

But how true that there is no good without a balancing evil. With all these pleasures I cannot ward off the sad feeling that presses upon me when I think of my dear school-home and of those friends there from whom I must now be separated. "Alma Mater" is a happy appellation for this endeared spot, and often I find myself there, absorbed in the "memory of joys that are past, pleasant and mournful to the soul."

I am constantly reminded of the difference between home-life and school-life. That old friend the bell, often so dreaded by the student, is the one first missed. The morning

after my arrival, it really seemed difficult to leave my bed until admonished by its well-known noisy tones that it was the hour for rising. A school-girl, you know, is expected to have acquired a habit of punctuality ; and yet I find myself constantly in danger of losing my reputation for this important trait of character, in waiting for the signal to be given by this trusty messenger. To be obliged to plan business for each day seems really a great change, this having been so long done for me, and my duty being a faithful attention to the employment marked out for the hour. It is quite as true that there is no place like school, as that there is "no place like home." Each has its peculiar trials as well as pleasures.

In leaving the dear seat of instruction, I find myself entering upon new and untried scenes ; new duties as well as new enjoyments open before me. Instead of following a set of prescribed rules, I must decide for myself what course is the right one to be pursued ; and as I have been so long accustomed to have teachers to guide me, the responsibility seems not easy to be borne. Now how invaluable do those lessons appear that from week to week you used to impress upon your pupils in the

“Practical Knowledge Class.” Often do I revolve your instructions, and seek to recall something that will apply to my present circumstances; and then how plainly I seem to hear you say, “Go to Jesus; search the Scriptures; seek the wisdom that cometh from above.” In following these precepts, sometimes light beams upon my pathway, and I feel strong to press onward in the performance of duty; but then again I walk in darkness, and know not what course to pursue.

Feeling assured that my dear teacher will sympathize in the trials of her absent child, and will feel it a privilege to aid her by words of counsel and encouragement, I have taken my pen with the intention of making her acquainted with my present circumstances.

You know that I am but a babe in Christ, and quite inexperienced in the devices by which one is liable to be drawn aside from the narrow way; yet I am here surrounded by worldly influences, with no Christian friend with whom I can hold communion. My parents are not professors of religion, and my brothers and sisters, as well as my former associates, are devoted to gayety and pleasure. You know also that I am very impulsive,

much given to sportiveness and mirth, and can therefore perceive that the temptations to which I am exposed are those by which I am most liable to be led astray.

There has been much change in the society here while I have been absent at school. Large and fashionable parties are now frequent, in which extravagance in dress and late hours are distinguishing features, while dancing seems to be the favorite amusement. You will therefore be surprised when I tell you that these parties are attended by professors of religion as well as others. Some of the leading members of the church open their houses for these entertainments, saying that there can be no possible harm in dancing, and that those who are opposed to it are exceedingly narrow-minded.

I have been present at a few of these gay assemblies, not knowing at first just what course to pursue; but the influence upon my own mind soon convinced me that it was my duty to decline an attendance; and in taking this stand, I could not do otherwise than give my reasons for it. This has caused many unpleasant remarks, and my friends are quite disposed to ridicule what they call my Puri-

tanism. My minister too thinks me unnecessarily precise, and that I take more upon myself than is proper for so young a person.

You thus perceive, my dear teacher, that I have some real trials, and that I need the advice and aid of a judicious friend. I come therefore to you with confidence, assured that you will give attention to what seems to your inexperienced pupil a case of so much importance, and that you will be to her a counsellor and friend.

One difficulty that I have met with I must mention. As I knew you would direct, I have searched my Bible, thinking I should thus be able to prove dancing wrong; but I can find no specific directions in regard to this amusement. It seems also very evident that in ancient times it was practised by persons of great piety; as for instance, Miriam led the daughters of Israel in dances, after the passage of the Red sea; and David also, the "man after God's own heart," "danced before the Lord with all his might" when the ark of God was being brought to Jerusalem. Then there is the passage, "a time to dance," that I do not know how to explain, if this amusement should never be practised. At the same time I can-

not see how an attendance upon these fashionable assemblies can be right, for I am sure the mind is thus unfitted for religious duties, as well as for the quiet and simple pleasures of home.

Do, my dear Miss Stanley, write me soon, and explain this difficult subject. You will thus confer a great blessing on your affectionate

MARIA.

LETTER II.

I AM happy that my dear Maria reposes so much confidence in her absent teacher as to apply to her for a solution of the difficulties in which she finds herself involved. I do follow my beloved pupils to their far-off homes, and feel it a privilege to aid them in pressing onward in the heavenly way. To be informed of their peculiar trials and temptations is therefore very desirable, as it enables me the better to adapt any suggestions I may make.

In reading your letter, I could not but be impressed with the thought that our very trials are an evidence of our heavenly Father's love, so beautifully expressed by Cowper:

“Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer;
Bring me to my Saviour's feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.”

Thus a situation apparently unfavorable to growth in grace, by rendering us more watchful, more sensible of our own weakness, and leading us to rely more entirely on Jesus, proves a blessing to our souls. You recollect the argument of Butler, showing that in this

probationary state we are encompassed with temptations, that by our resistance to them we may adhere more firmly to the right, and thus our character be improved.

In a sermon which I recently heard, trials and temptations were considered means of grace, as well as prayer and the reading and hearing of the word. David seems to have had a sense of this when he says, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." As the sweeping and continuous blast causes the tree to take deeper root, thus preparing it to stand firm before the hurricane, so temptation, by the effort required for its resistance, leads to the increase of moral power, and to a firmer hold on Him who is our strength and our salvation.

That all the powers of body and mind are strengthened by use, is a law of our nature. Christian principle will not become strong, any more than the intellect, unless brought into vigorous exercise. In this resistance to influences that would draw the believer astray into forbidden paths, the mainspring of every effort is love to Him who has wrought the wondrous change in the soul. Love to God has been beautifully compared to the Kohinoor; other

virtues, to gems from this "mountain of light." We know indeed that unless the heart is wholly consecrated to God, and the affections all centre in this heavenly Friend, external compliance with the divine precepts is but a pharisaical varnish. I trust your heart, my dear Maria, has been renewed by the Spirit of God, that you have entered "by the gate" into the "narrow way," and that you are pressing onward and upward. May the trials you now experience bring into vigorous exercise all the Christian graces, increasing your faith and your humble reliance on our great High-priest, who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," having been "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin."

God says to you as to Solomon, "Ask what I shall give thee." Like him, may you ask wisdom to pursue such a course as shall be for the glory of His great name; and may you "ask in faith, nothing wavering;" for to such our Father in heaven "giveth liberally." Your teacher would also implore wisdom and divine guidance in replying to your inquiries, and directing you aright.

The word of God is our only safe guide; but we need the influences of the Holy Spirit

to unfold its teachings, and to lead us into all truth. We shall receive these divine influences, if we come as little children and sit at Jesus' feet to be taught by him. It is true that we do not always find precepts as explicit as we may wish; but prayerful study and diligent attention to the spirit of the sacred volume causes light to beam from the inspired page, and the path of duty is made plain. It is essential to compare scripture with scripture, as one part explains another, and thus enables us the better to understand the teachings contained in this divine directory. Detached passages or precepts, taken without regard to their due connection, may be used to sustain almost any form of error; and we may thus account for the various opinions, both in regard to doctrine and duty, professedly supported by the Bible. There is no excuse for being thus misled, since those who come humbly to be taught of God will be enlightened from above; while those who seek to bring the divine word to their own standard, are often left to follow their own devices.

In regard to an attendance upon the parties which you mention, I am sure you have come to a right decision, although it places

you in a trying position. This difference of opinion among pious people as respects dancing and other amusements of a like character, seems quite inexplicable. * I have given the subject considerable thought, and can see some reasons for the diversity now so common, which I will endeavor to explain.

In the world of matter, objects look differently according to the stand-point from which they are viewed; and the same seems to be true in the world of mind. - Thus one person looking at a gay assemblage for fashionable amusements merely as affording an opportunity for social enjoyment—and this in connection with the law of our being, that we are formed for social pleasures—would at once decide that the indulgence must be innocent; while another, taking into view the tendency of such scenes to produce vanity and love of dress, and to interfere with domestic and religious duties, would as readily decide that such indulgences are wrong, inconsistent with the directions of his Lord and Master, and the example he left for our imitation. So in regard to dancing, one person, taking into consideration merely the movement of the limbs as expressive of joyful emotions, would decide it no

more sinful than walking or laughing; while another, considering the character of the human heart, and the influence naturally resulting from this fascinating amusement in mixed circles, would as readily decide it must be wrong.

I will now reply to your inquiries respecting the dancing mentioned in Scripture.

The word dance is often used by figure of speech as expressive of joyful emotions: as, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned, and ye have not lamented." Here, as you perceive, danced is the opposite of lamented. So in the passage which you mention, "a time to dance," it is the opposite of mourn, and therefore means rejoice. The sacred writer, however, is merely stating the condition of things in our world, and by many pithy antitheses, enumerating the various changes men are called to experience. He states what is true in the history of human events, though evidently not with the design of showing what is lawful to be done. He also says, "a time to kill;" but no one would therefore argue that it is right to commit murder. Still dancing, like laughing or weeping, is a natural expression of feeling. Children when

pleased, skip or dance, as well as laugh; and when in distress, burst into paroxysms of sobbing or weeping.

The usages of civilized society lead us to look for a restraint upon the feelings among people of mature age. The discipline of education enables young persons to exercise self-control, and they thus acquire the habit of suppressing, on proper occasions, the external signs of joy or sorrow. Were we to be present at an Irish wake, we should undoubtedly witness specimens of bodily exercises expressive of grief or gladness, in persons of advanced age; but while amused at what seems really ludicrous, we should consider the exhibition an evidence of an uncultivated state of society, and as indicating a want of maturity of mind.

In the earlier ages of the world, "when men labored to communicate their feelings to one another by those expressive cries and gestures which nature taught them," joyful emotions were indicated by measured movements of the body, as well as by language; and thus, in many nations, dancing was employed in religious worship. Combined with music both instrumental and vocal, this poetry of motion was used to give expression to feelings of glad-

ness and thanksgiving. Thus we are enabled to account for the dancing of David, and of others eminent for piety mentioned in the Bible. It is evident that it was performed as an act of religious worship, and as expressive of deep-felt emotions of gratitude and love. If dancing assemblies were now of a similar character, they might of course be regarded with approbation. To meet together to express thanksgiving to the Giver of all good, and to magnify His great and holy name, how worthy the employment, and with what earnestness would the most devout engage in the delightful exercise.

In this view of the subject, we are led to an important truth: that the moral character of an action is determined by the motive that leads to its performance. Music and dancing were employed in the worship of the golden calf, as well as when "Miriam took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances;" but how different the performance on these two occasions: the one expressive of an unholy devotion to an idol, the other of adoration and praise to the eternal God, who had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt, and the yawning abyss of the Red sea.

The question might here be suggested ; To which are dancing assemblies at the present day most nearly allied : the multitude that surrounded the golden calf, or the joyful company that followed the footsteps of Miriam ? You may not be struck with much similarity in either case, but if any is to be found, it must be to the worshippers of the golden calf, who, like modern pleasure-seekers, "sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play," rather than to the grateful throng of Hebrew maidens who thus gave expression to their feelings of devout thanksgiving : "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously ;" a song not often heard in a fashionable coterie.

And now, dear Maria, I think you can see very plainly that the dancing mentioned in Scripture as performed by the people of God, gives no countenance to this fascinating amusement as introduced into parties at the present day.

As a religious ceremony, dancing in modern times is not practised in Christian nations, except by the Shakers, or followers of Ann Lee, a small denomination originating in England, though a few may be found in the United States. In pagan countries, both of Africa and Asia,

as well as among the Indians of North America, dancing is still performed as an act of idolatrous worship.

I believe I have said enough to settle your difficulties as respects the passages of Scripture you mentioned, and it is time to bring my long letter to a close.

In regard to the feelings of your parents and other friends, I would advise you to explain your reasons for not wishing to mingle in scenes of gayety and dissipation. You will undoubtedly be permitted to comply with the dictates of your own conscience. It can hardly be possible that any one would insist upon your engaging in what you believe in your case would be wrong. It is necessary to act with decision. Christians never honor God, nor induce unbelievers the more to respect religion, by conformity to the world, nor by indulging in such amusements as indicate a greater love of pleasure than of God. Consistency is admired even by those who are themselves inconsistent.

With the earnest desire and prayer that you may clearly see your duty, and resist every allurement to a wrong course, I am your affectionate friend,

M. STANLEY.

LETTER III.

MY DEAR MISS STANLEY:

Many thanks for your letter, and for the light you have thrown upon my pathway. I feel very grateful for your efforts to give me right views of a subject which it seemed to me so difficult to understand, though I must acknowledge that after reading your explanation, the whole matter seemed so plain, that I could not help feeling out of patience with myself for looking at the subject so superficially. I think your letter will lead me to read my Bible with more thought and attention, and to feel the importance of coming as a little child, to be taught of God.

I am more and more sensible every day that one of my greatest faults is acting without reflection, or from the impulse of feeling. In this way I am very apt to come to wrong conclusions, as well as to do things which afterwards give me much regret.

I heard a sermon last evening from the text, "Be not weary in well-doing." In describing patience, the minister said, that it does

not mean "passive inactivity," but "earnest labor, until the object to be attained is accomplished." The laying of the Atlantic cable was given as an illustration of the exercise of this virtue. May I never be weary in my efforts to know my duty and do it; and may I ever be guided by principle rather than by feeling.

What you said about the design of God in placing us in this state of trial, was not altogether new to me, for I remember well what Butler says; but that trials and temptations are means of grace, I never considered in just that light. Still, when reading the passage, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience," I thought it meant about the same thing.

The danger of coming to a wrong conclusion by looking only at one side of a thing, is finely illustrated by the story of the two knights and the shield, the one declaring it was gold, and the other silver; both being right, because one side was gold and the other silver; and yet they almost came to blows, and would have done so, if each had not happened to get a glance at the other side.

The story of the chameleon too, is a good illustration of the different ideas people get, according to the light in which any thing is viewed. I can now understand how persons can differ about dancing, as well as other subjects. I can also see plainly that the character of an action depends upon the motive for its performance. I recollect very well what Dr. Wayland says in regard to this.

In answer to your question, to which of the assemblies you mentioned, a modern dancing party bears the greatest resemblance, I could not help thinking, that those who are devoted to fashionable entertainments are in some respects like the worshippers of the golden calf; for they seem to make an idol of some particular amusement, and to give themselves up to it, as much as the Israelites did to their molten god. Those who spend whole nights in dancing, and who seem to think they could not endure life if deprived of this source of enjoyment, do really make it their golden calf. We have a young lady here that I think is an illustration of this. She was told not long since by her physician, that she could not live long, if she continued to attend parties; but she says she is "so fond of dancing, that she cannot give

it up ;” and I know that she seldom stays away from any scene of pleasure.

But you say that dancing, or this poetry of motion, is a natural expression of joyful feelings; is it then improper, when a light-hearted company of young ladies are together, to take a little dance? If it is natural to be in motion when one feels mirthful and happy, I should think it would be just as proper to dance a cotillion, or skip over the floor in waltzes and polkas, as to laugh and talk nonsense. Children skip about when they are full of fun and gladness, and why may not those a little older skip by rule, or to the sound of music, when they feel light-hearted and joyous? I cannot see what harm there would be in doing this. I should think this kind of recreation better than talking nonsense. If it is wrong, it seems strange that so many good people approve of it; and not only permit it to be practised in their own houses, but encourage their children to learn to perform its varied evolutions with ease and grace. I do not ask if it is right to attend parties which do not break up until near morning; but whether, when a few young ladies are together, they might not keep step with the music of the piano in a lit-

tle dance. I do not see what difference there can be between such dancing and calisthenics, or other gymnastic exercises; and these, you know, are very much approved and practised in schools.

My parents are not disposed to insist upon my doing what I think is wrong; but it would gratify them to have me take a part in this amusement in small circles, and sometimes to attend a party. They say they do not like I should be so singular, and set myself up as being better than other people.

Please write me what you think of such little dances, and tell me how far I ought to conform to the customs of those with whom I associate. Yours with much esteem,

MARIA.

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR MARIA:

Yours is received, and its perusal has been to me a source of much satisfaction. I rejoice in the evidence it gives that you are becoming acquainted with your own character, and engaged in the work of self-improvement. Happy am I to be assured that my impulsive Maria really feels the importance of acquiring the habit of close thinking, and of carefully examining that blessed chart which marks out the way to the heavenly Canaan.

I am anxious that my beloved pupil should become a discreet and useful woman; and I know that, to attain this great end, she must exercise her reasoning powers, and ever act under the influence of Christian principle. With the best intentions, yet being very much a creature of impulse, and possessing great liveliness of imagination, there is danger of coming to wrong conclusions, and pursuing a course which may give cause for repentance. To improve our own character, as well as to benefit others, is our life-work. This can be accom-

plished only by becoming thoroughly acquainted with ourselves, as well as exploring the various avenues of knowledge that open before us. Especially must we study the Scriptures, and earnestly seek the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit. This is a work which we are all under obligation to perform, and in its performance we have the promise of receiving aid from above. We are accountable for the talents which we have the ability to gain, as well as for those committed to our trust. This is plainly taught in the parable of the talents, by the doom pronounced on the wicked and slothful servant.

You inquire whether dancing, since it is a natural method of expressing pleasurable feelings, may not be practised for this purpose in an evening party of young ladies; or rather, if this is not as well as to spend the time in talking nonsense. To skip around the room keeping time with music, is certainly a very innocent way of taking recreation; and that it should ever be condemned by good people, must appear very strange to those who have had little experience of the seductive influences to which they are exposed in this world of sin, and who are little aware of the many devices

of the enemy of souls, by which they are liable to be ensnared. In itself it may be more innocent than vain and foolish conversation, and no more objectionable than calisthenics and other gymnastic exercises.

Before answering your inquiry, however, permit me to say a few words in regard to amusements in general. The word amusement is said to be derived from "*a musis*." The muses, as you know, were considered by the Greeks, the divinities presiding not only over the fine arts, but also over geometry, astronomy, and other sciences; consequently "*a musis*" implies, turning away from severe labor, and recreating one's self. The word recreation means recreating, or producing new strength and buoyancy of feeling, which can only be attained by relaxation. Here, again, relaxation is a figure of speech, by which it is shown that as the bow needs to be unbent in order to retain its elasticity, so the mind requires to be relieved from close application that it may retain its vigor, and its ability to think with clearness and force. Amusements then are necessary to recruit our wearied natures; and as we are social beings, those are sometimes desirable that can be enjoyed in concert, or

which tend to the development of the social feelings.

We must not lose sight, however, of the great truth that we are also accountable beings, and that we cannot consistently allow ourselves to become absorbed in any thing, either business or pleasure, by which we shall impair our ability for the performance of duty, or for fulfilling the obligations incumbent upon us. The increase of the talents committed to our charge being required, to accomplish this should be our first object, and we should indulge only in such amusements, and to such a degree, as will promote this advancement. Social intercourse, or a mutual interchange of thought and feeling with those whom we love, is a very happy method of obtaining this exhilarating influence; but whether frivolous chitchat, or talking nonsense, is a necessary means for accomplishing this purpose, or an indulgence at all consistent with the character of a rational being, is a question which requires serious consideration. Conversation may certainly be a pleasant recreation, and yet not consist of mere idle gossip, or in repeating that which fills the mind with thoughts insipid and vain. We are, however, obliged to know that the intercourse in

fashionable circles is too often of this trifling character; and it is with shame too that I admit that our sex take the lead in conversation of this kind, though it cannot be said that they alone carry it on. Many, no doubt, think to improve upon this state of things, by the introduction of dancing. However, as two wrongs cannot make a right, the evil of the one by no means establishes the innocence of the other.

Dancing consists of various movements of the body, some of them proper and beautiful, others, when practised by both sexes, repulsive to a person of true delicacy. Waltzing is the most objectionable, though the polka also seems calculated to corrupt the character. Those who have never seen these dances, can have little idea of their impropriety. I not long since met with this remark: "I do not think the waltz a modest dance, and the coarse familiarity of the polka is only fit for low society." Thus you see there are serious objections to some kinds of dancing. These exercises may be omitted, but not easily, in a company of any size; and the varied evolutions of the mazy dance, under the influence of music, are so fascinating, that one would hardly have power to resist the allurements, should they be

introduced, although revolting to the feelings in hours of sober reflection. This brings into view one of the great evils of this amusement, its absorbing tendency.

There is much theorizing about the innocence of a little dance; but in practice, moderate dancing is something very unusual. When do such parties usually close? Is not the approach of morning the signal for the gay revelers to return to their homes? The exciting character of this amusement, and the excess to which it is carried, furnish a conclusive reason for declining its indulgence. In the little young ladies' dance of which you speak in your letter, you are particular to mention that you would close at an early hour. This no doubt would be the intention of each of you, but under its fascinating influence, hours are very liable to pass uncounted.

In deciding upon the propriety of an amusement, we must look at it as usually practised; and we must not only take into consideration its effect upon ourselves, but upon society. Dr. Paley gives a rule which we should think all reasonable persons would follow: "When there are two sides, the one safe and the other uncertain, it is always best to take the safe side."

And another writer says, "Entire abstinence from dancing is probably the safer rule; for those who venture a few steps will soon be drawn beyond the first intention, while their views of right and expediency will gradually sink to a standard with their wishes."

A select circle of young ladies might, as you suggest, indulge for a little time in dancing with no injury to themselves, unless it should give them so great a taste for this pleasure that they would be induced to attend mixed assemblies, and to join the giddy throng that at the dawn of day are still absorbed in the whirling mazes of the dance; and then no calculation could be made of the amount of evil resulting from this indulgence in the little circle at the evening party. Even if all the company are not thus affected—if only one, by the example here given, or by this fascinating influence, is drawn within the eddying circles by which she will be engulfed in the vortex of dissipation, would not the possibility of such a result be a sufficient reason to beware of this amusement? What if those instrumental in leading this companion to indulge in this intoxicating pleasure, and thus to enter upon the way of ruin, were the professed followers of

Christ; were they not guilty of a great sin? In pursuing this course, were they imitating Him who gave himself for the redemption of lost sinners? Is it not the duty of every Christian to deny himself and follow Jesus? And if love to this divine Friend is the ruling principle in his heart, will he not, by self-denying obedience, give evidence of this love?

And here I would refer you to an instance, which I think shows the course which will be pursued by one who is moved to action by this blessed influence. A circle of young ladies in Hartford were accustomed to meet for social enjoyment, spending a part of the time in music and dancing. The exercise was performed with so much propriety, and by a company so select, that it seemed in no respect objectionable—similar probably to what you propose. Miss Mary Hawes, afterwards Mrs. Van Lennep of the Syrian mission, was one of this circle; and although the daughter of their minister and a professor of religion, she united in the dancing as well as in the music. At length, however, she learned that a person attending a public assembly had given as a reason for this attendance, "Mary Hawes dances." Although sensible of the difference in the two

performances, yet it was plain to her that she, by engaging in this exercise, was influencing others to frequent scenes of exciting amusement, and thus to become absorbed in the giddy whirl of fashionable pleasures. She therefore at once decided that she would dance no more. For a time she continued her attendance at the circle without taking part in this exercise, then left at the close of the musical performance, and at length withdrew entirely. In the bloom of youth, and with a keen relish for social pleasures, from love to Jesus and a desire to advance his cause, she was led to deny herself an indulgence in what was to her a source of refined enjoyment. May my dear Maria have this same spirit of devotion to the blessed Redeemer.

A luxury of which some can partake with more safety than others, or that with a moderate use seems not particularly injurious, but when indulged to excess is found to be attended with great danger, must be used with caution, if used at all; and the only real safety is in abstaining from it altogether. The danger also is in proportion to the delight experienced in its indulgence, and the difficulty of discovering the point at which this indulgence should cease.

I think this will apply to the subject before us; and I know of nothing that so fully illustrates the stand that, under such circumstances, should be taken, as the course pursued in our country in the great temperance reformation.

The drinking of ardent spirits was a very general practice in my youthful days, by many with no apparently injurious effects, and no one seemed to imagine the moderate use of it could possibly be wrong. Some knew when they had taken as much as they could bear, and the little they drank seemed to be no injury to them. Still intemperance prevailed to a fearful extent, and miserable wretches reduced to a state of beastly intoxication were to be found in all classes of society, while persons making rapid advances to this state were everywhere common. An effort was first made to induce people to use spirits temperately; and for this purpose societies were formed in some parts of the country. The influence of these societies was, however, scarcely felt. So riveted were the chains of habit, and so fascinating this beverage, that the maddening potion would be gradually increased, though infamy, disease, and death stared fearfully at the wretched inebriate. He drank on until reason was gone,

and then dragged a miserable existence to a drunkard's grave.

At length aroused to a sense of danger, both the Christian and the philanthropist felt that something must be done to arrest the evil, and the subject was taken into serious consideration. Total abstinence was thought to be absolutely necessary in order to a reformation; not for the reformation of the confirmed sot, for at that time this was thought impossible, but for those who occasionally indulged in the free use of spirits. But to decide who were the persons in danger, and who therefore needed to abstain wholly from this dangerous beverage, was not easy; for how could the precise point be ascertained at which intemperance begins? So gradual is the descent from an almost imperceptible commencement, that in the use of ardent spirits it is hard to tell how far one may indulge with safety. Those most rapidly advancing in the downward course were sometimes least willing to admit their danger; and it therefore became necessary for those most decidedly temperate to set the example of total abstinence. This was done. The best men in the nation came to the rescue, and took a noble stand. For a time woman was not called

to enter the lists; but it was soon found necessary that her influence should be exerted in promoting this worthy cause. With readiness did she engage in the work, and unite in the pledge of total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks. The mighty results accomplished by this effort we will not trace, but will make the application to the subject we are now investigating.

Dancing is so fascinating, and produces so great an excitement of feeling, that a person drawn into its mazes, like the victim of intemperance, seems unable to extricate herself. Not only does its frequent indulgence create a distaste for domestic pleasures; it is attended by a love of dress, with a profusion of vain and frivolous thoughts; the heart is hardened, and serious reflection entirely dissipated. How often have fashionable entertainments put an end to anxiety for the soul, and produced insensibility to eternal things. You recollect the account of that young lady induced by the present of a rich dress from her father to attend a ball, who thus lost her conviction of sin, and in her dying hour declared this dress the price of her soul, and her father the cause of her eternal ruin. A good minister says, "If I

wished to lead as many as possible blindfold to destruction, I would preach up dancing."

Before this you have undoubtedly anticipated my answer to your inquiry, and have also inferred that those who desire to exert a right influence, should take the same stand as respects this amusement as was taken in regard to the drinking of ardent spirits. If from that which in itself is right the apostle was willing to abstain, lest he might grieve one of his fellow-Christians, much more ought we to feel our obligation to abstain from that which is unfavorable to virtue, often producing feelings at variance with the commands of God and dishonoring his holy name.

We have already spoken of the fact that this amusement is by many good people thought innocent, and by others as very evil. This difference of opinion may be caused, I suppose, by some having indulged in it in the form least objectionable; they therefore do not feel any injury to be apprehended; while others, acquainted with its real influence, feel constrained to pass upon it the sentence of condemnation. Some of my friends seem much surprised at the suggestion that dancing excites wrong feelings, for they never were conscious of any thing of

the kind. How well such persons are acquainted with their own hearts I do not know, nor can I tell what views they have of Christian obligation. Much the same remarks are made by many in reference to the use of ardent spirits. A little, they say, does not hurt them, and they cannot be deprived of this luxury because others will injure themselves by using it to excess.

I fear that those who thus seem to think only of themselves are unacquainted with Paul, and have little idea of what is meant by giving up all for Christ. Christians are assuredly bound to abstain from what may lead others into sin, and from any act that may grieve even the "little ones" that believe in Christ. I think a serious and prayerful study of our Saviour's teachings in Matt. 18:6-10 will lead the child of God to realize the necessity of watchfulness and prayer, lest by following the precepts of worldly wisdom, he should be guilty of the sin there so vividly portrayed. The example of the great apostle furnishes a striking illustration of the manner in which he understood this divine teaching, and should impress Christians with the obligation which rests upon them as well as upon Paul, towards those who are members of that family whose names are

written in heaven. An indulgence in this amusement is declared to be "offensive to a majority of the people of God;" this therefore is a sufficient reason for those who profess the name of Christ to abstain from it altogether. If not evil, it has at least "the appearance of evil."

It cannot indeed be denied, that in our country many more persons professedly pious now engage in dancing than formerly, but the same can be said of Sabbath-breaking. It is indeed lamentably true that the customs, if not the principles, of our Puritan fathers are becoming more and more unfashionable, and that the distance between the church and the world is greatly lessened. People of the world have not the dread of religion that has sometimes been manifested, perhaps owing to a change in public opinion, but rather, I think, to the fact that it is not looked upon as requiring so much self-denial.

If you please, you may show this letter to your parents and to your Christian friends. They may thus be induced to excuse you for differing in opinion from them, and perhaps may be led to view the subject in a new light.

Write soon to your affectionate,

M. STANLEY.

LETTER V.

MY DEAR TEACHER :

Your last letter has led me to look upon the subject we are discussing in a new light: that in deciding upon any course of action, we should consider not only its influence upon ourselves, but also upon others, and that we are under obligation to avoid whatever may grieve the children of God, I have never before realized as I do now. That such a little thing as uniting in a dance in a select circle of young ladies should be made the subject of serious consideration, and that the indulgence would be wrong if Christians were grieved or offended by it, were new ideas to me. Still, after carefully perusing your letter, and reflecting upon the teachings of our Saviour to which you referred me, I cannot but feel that you are right. I had always supposed that if conscious of no evil influence to myself, there was no reason to decline taking a part in dancing, or any other amusement that might be proposed. I ought to have remembered what Dr. Wayland teaches in his Moral Science, that "two views are to be taken of an action: first, as affecting ourselves;

and secondly, as affecting both ourselves and society." I now also see that the direction of the apostle, "Abstain from all appearance of evil," as well as the teachings of our Saviour, require us to avoid this amusement; for many Christians consider it evil, and are grieved when those who profess to be his followers give themselves up to its indulgence.

I have lately been reading the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, and I found something which illustrates this very point upon which we are writing. In giving an account of a visit to London, she speaks of the opportunity she had to engage in the varied pleasures of this gay metropolis; but she also says that she was led wholly to give up attending all places of public amusement. The reason she gave for this was, "I saw they tended to promote evil; therefore, even if I could attend them without being hurt myself, I felt that in entering these places I lent my aid to promote that which, from what I saw, I was sure had led many from the path of rectitude and chastity, and brought them into much sin." This is that good Mrs. Fry who engaged with so much earnestness in the instruction of degraded women in Newgate. She exhibits in both cases the same self-deny-

ing spirit of devotion to the good of her fellow-beings. She would not gratify herself if, by her example, others might be led into the way of evil. She was also willing to withdraw from scenes of refinement and social enjoyment, to labor for the renovation of beings the most degraded, and whose condition must have been revolting to a person of true delicacy. What but love could have moved her to such a work; love to Jesus, and to those for whom he shed his precious blood? The evidence that I have the spirit of Christ must surely be a willingness to deny myself for his sake.

I have showed your letter to my friends. I do not know what any one thinks but my parents, and they say you are right. I now see that it would not be well to introduce dancing into our evening circles. Our Saviour has taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation;" and if we offer this prayer in sincerity, we shall not voluntarily expose ourselves to allurements to do wrong.

But my dear Miss Stanley, do not cease writing me upon this subject. I need your timely suggestions to remind me of my duty, and to aid me in exerting a right influence over those with whom I associate.

I have recently met with another book which I think a great treasure. It is the "Life of Adelaide Newton." I have found some excellent thoughts on the course to be pursued in regard to worldly amusements, so much to the point that I think you will be pleased if I copy some of them. In writing to a school-mate, she says,

"I cannot help thinking, if you are much occupied with thoughts of heaven, of holiness, of the meek and lowly Jesus, and how he lived and walked on earth, you will feel a secret shrinking from worldly society, which will make balls, etc., very painful to you. God has left no positive commands upon things of this sort, for he knows that when the heart is given to him, the life will assuredly be given too. And the motive of gospel obedience is not so much duty as love. The child that loves its parents devotedly, does what will please them at any cost." But again she says, "If you feel obliged to join your family or friends in scenes which give you no pleasure, let them see it is from a sense of duty, not from inclination;" and again, that while the apostle says, "'Come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing,' he tells us, on the

other hand, that if we keep no company with ungodly persons, we must needs go out of the world." She says too that "each day Jesus is saying to the Father for you, I pray not that she should be taken out of the world, but that she should be kept from the evil;" and that "these words may be a constant plea when we are in difficulty how to act."

I think Miss Newton's suggestions altogether to the point. She gives evidence of such deep-toned piety, and such spirituality of mind, that though young in years, she seems to have made great advance in a Christian life. May it be thus with your

MARIA.

LETTER VI.

MY DEAR MARIA :

Your letter was very gratifying. I rejoice that you not only feel determined yourself to avoid what is wrong, but to use your influence to induce others to do the same. If we have evidence that love is the ruling principle that moves us to action, we may feel confident that we are born of God. The spirit of Christ is a spirit of love. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," that the world "might not perish;" and love to men while "yet sinners," led the blessed Saviour to bear the sin of the world in his own body on the cross; and if we have this love, we shall take up the cross and follow him.

I am glad that you have the "Life of Adelaide Newton." I think I have seldom read a biography more calculated to do one good. She was an eminent Christian, though but a youth when called home to her gracious reward; but she lived much in a little time. As her short life was spent in a retired sphere, free from great dangers and thrilling scenes,

and much of it in a sick-room, an example is thus furnished which may be particularly beneficial to persons in the common walks of life, and to those who are called to suffer as well as to act. She possessed great abilities and a highly cultivated mind; but piety was her shining ornament. As a Christian she was superior to others. May my dear Maria have this living, growing piety. I rejoice that she has so good a helper as Miss Newton. May you be enabled to resist the temptations of this alluring world, of your own evil heart, and of the great enemy of souls. Beware of the delusive plea, "It is only for once." If a path lead astray, the first step in it must be wrong.

We should also continually bear in mind, that we cannot keep in the right way except we follow our divine Leader. "Looking to Jesus"—how much is implied in this, and how constantly should the eye of faith be fixed upon him. The hill Difficulty is before us; but though steep and rugged the ascent, and the lions seem ready to devour us, onward and upward we must press. We "walk by faith," and relying upon the Captain of our salvation, we shall come off "conquerors, and more than conquerors," over all our spiritual enemies.

"He endured the cross, despising the shame." What an incentive this! With such a leader, can we fail to press onward? The apostle's direction is, "Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds," resisting "even to blood, striving against sin." In nothing will a believer be willing to engage, upon which he cannot implore the blessing of God. By this test can the character of an action be proved; for upon that which puts God out of the thoughts, that leads to the indulgence of feelings which he has forbidden, which unfits for duties that he requires to be performed, can we seek his blessing? We must strive to know our duty, must examine the ground of our obligations; and becoming fully persuaded of the course we ought to pursue, must adhere to it with firmness:

I am aware that in the stand you have taken, you will meet with opposition. The advocates for vain amusements will maintain their cause with much tenacity, and you must be able to show very clearly the reasons for your decision. Your opponents will not always be the worldly-minded and vain; for many, who by profession belong to the ranks

of the Redeemer, will argue with an earnestness worthy of a better cause, that an indulgence in these pleasures is both proper and consistent for those who have consecrated themselves to the service of Christ. This is indeed sad, and teaches us the necessity of searching diligently to find the right way.

That people must have some amusement, is urged as earnestly as if any one doubted its truth. This is a device often used in supporting any form of error—to attempt to prove some other thing rather than the very point presented for proof. The necessity of relaxation for both mind and body is self-evident; it is taught by the laws of nature as well as by the testimony of experience. It is also true, that recreations, to be beneficial, must be pleasing, and of such a character as to give to life an agreeable variety. They must recreate, or give new strength for the labor to be performed. Movements of the body are pleasing and necessary for health; therefore dancing is suggested as one of the most suitable methods of attaining exhilaration of mind and vigor of body. It is undoubtedly true that in this “poetry of motion” there is a refreshing influence, and that it might be so performed as to

be highly beneficial. It is not however for dancing as an exercise, or as a preparation for the better discharge of duty, that the advocate for this pleasure would plead; it is for an indulgence in this amusement for its own sake. The propriety of dancing-parties is urged, and it is asserted that fashionable assemblies furnish this agreeable and very desirable recreation. Let the exercise be ever so long continued, or the most unseasonable portion of the twenty-four hours be selected for the performance, still it is urged that dancing is healthful and pleasant, and that attendance upon these scenes of pleasure cannot therefore be improper. Those who from frequent indulgence have become thus entangled in the wiles laid down to ensnare them by the arch deceiver, see not their folly nor their danger. Self-gratification being their great aim, they weary themselves in its pursuit. This is apparent in the excess to which this amusement is carried in fashionable circles. The devotees of pleasure see not that they are doing outrage to nature, nor that by kindling the fire of excitement, neither vigor of body nor a healthy exhilaration of mind can be produced.

The graphic description of this method of

receiving pleasure, as given by Miss Beecher, would seem sufficient to convince any reasonable person of the inconsistency of resorting to places of fashionable amusement for the invigoration of either mind or body. I will quote this description for your benefit, or to aid you in sustaining your cause.

“In the first place, these assemblies are in the night season, when quiet is better than exercise. Next, they are in rooms where the air is vitiated by many lights and many breaths, and where quiet is far better than quickened circulation. Next, the clothing of the female portion of the performers is usually the very worst that could be selected for such an occasion, too thin about the chest, and too heavy below it. Then, before the night is passed, the stomach, which should rest when the muscles are exercised, is loaded with the most unhealthy of all kinds of food, condiments, and drinks. Finally, after the skin, stomach, and lungs have been debilitated by hours of abuse, and the whole brain and nervous system exhausted by mental and physical excitement, the company adjourn to cold halls and robing-rooms, and go forth to ride through the night air with weary, sleepy drivers, to weary,

sleepy servants or friends, whom selfish amusements have deprived of proper rest and repose."

By a night spent in this manner, what refreshment can there be to mind or body, and for what duties can a person be thus prepared? It is true that recreations are necessary not only for the young, but for those who are immersed in business, oppressed with labor and care; but,

"To join advantage to amusement, to gather profit with pleasure,

Is the wise man's necessary aim when he lieth in the shade of recreation."

His motto is, "Business before pleasure," and his aim to become so much refreshed and invigorated as to be better fitted for the performance of duty. Children and youth, not having gained wisdom by experience and reflection, need the advice of older friends; they need direction in regard to the choice of amusements, and the amount of time which may with propriety be devoted to them. Recreations are of the right character only when they fit us for the better performance of that which we are under obligation to perform. They must tend to promote the health of both body and mind; and as we are immortal beings,

must not render us indifferent to the realities of another world, nor prevent a preparation for an eternal state. The excitement and fascination of this exercise, and consequently its immoderate indulgence, are therefore serious objections to its use. If it is urged that the amusement should not be carried to such an excess, we can only reply, that in calculating the effect of any pleasure, we must consider it as usually practised.

Suppose we survey a company engaged in this amusement. Though there may be gracefulness and beauty in some of the movements, are there not others from which a person of true delicacy would shrink? Let us examine the countenances as they pass before us. Is there not here a simpering smile, there a scornful leer, and now an amorous glance? Soft words are whispered, and an effort made to show off graces, and lay trains for flirtations. At length the night is far spent, and the morning's dawn compels the gay revellers to desist. They seek their homes; but when the rising sun pours forth his beams, and the time arrives to engage in the duties of the day, where are these devotees of pleasure? They still press the downy pillow; and at midday, when roused

from their uneasy slumbers, for what are they prepared? Are they refreshed by this night of revelry? Alas, how much the reverse!

We cannot look into the heart, but words and actions plainly reveal the state of the soul. What an indifference is manifested for the common employments of the day. The gay scene of the previous night seems to glitter before them. That pressure of the hand, that warm embrace, that look of admiration, that flattering compliment, that whirl of pleasure, how captivating! How dull and lonesome seems our fair friend, how little interest she manifests in the pleasures of home. Nothing, it would seem, can rouse her energies or awaken joyous emotions, but the anticipation of another scene of festive gayety.

Is it not then evident that dancing, as usually practised, does not answer the purpose for which a recreation is designed; that it refreshes neither body nor mind; but that, on the other hand, it unfits for the performance of duty? Are not these fashionable assemblies a wicked waste of time, and is not the money thus spent worse than thrown away?

Is merely a temporary injury sustained? In regard to the body, how often are disease

and death the consequence of these midnight scenes of dissipation. And what is the influence upon the mind? Is this amusement conducive to its healthy exercise, or to an increase of intellectual power? This I never heard advanced even by its warmest supporters.

Inquiring once of a friend, what was his success in an effort to carry on a literary society in a certain village, he replied that there were "too many dancing-parties to expect much success; for," said he, "where there is so much attention to the heels, there is little chance for head-work." And so it proved; for as the dancing-parties continued, the literary society came to an untimely end.

That time thus spent increases moral power, seems quite too absurd an idea to demand attention. Who can but admit that the tendency is to produce a vain, frivolous, trifling, pleasure-loving habit of mind, which "not only takes away the inclination, but the capacity for higher pursuits?" Manifold are the instances that prove its deadly influence upon the soul.

The effects of dancing are, however, best learned by experience; and the testimony of the learned and pious Dr. Adam Clarke, con-

cerning the effect produced upon his character by indulging in this fascinating amusement, I feel disposed to transcribe, as I think you will be interested in it, and what he says will probably have more influence upon the advocates of dancing than what either you or I can say.

"I learned to dance. I grew passionately fond of it; would scarcely walk but in measured time, and was constantly tripping, moving, and shuffling at all times and in all places. I grew impatient of control, was fond of company, and wished to mingle more than I had ever done with young people. I also got a passion for better clothing than that which fell to my lot in life, and was discontented when I found a neighbor's son dressed better than myself. I lost the spirit of subordination, did not love work, imbibed a spirit of idleness, and in short, drank in all the brain-sickening effluvia of pleasure. The authority of my parents was feared indeed, but not respected, and few serious impressions could prevail in a mind imbued now with frivolity. I in no case kept any improper company; nevertheless dancing was to me a perverting influence, an unmixed moral evil. It drowned the voice of a well-instructed conscience, and was the first cause of impelling

me to seek my happiness in this life. And I can testify that, as far as my observations have extended, and they have had a pretty wide range, I have known it to produce in others the same evils that it produced in me. I consider it therefore as a branch of that worldly education which leads from heaven to earth, from things spiritual to things sensual, from God to Satan. Let them plead for it who will, I know it to be evil, and that only. They who bring up their children in this way, or send them to those schools where dancing is taught, are consecrating them to the service of Moloch. 'No man in his senses will dance,' says Cicero, a heathen. Shame on those Christians who advocate a cause by which many sons have become profligate and many daughters ruined."

With this long quotation I must close my letter, hoping that you may receive much profit from what I have written, and may do much good to others.

Yours affectionately,

M. STANLEY.

LETTER VII.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

Your letter is received, and has been read not by myself alone, but by my friends. Misses Doty, Macy, and Lee are almost as much interested in the subject as I am. We wonder now that we could have been so undiscerning as not to be aware of the influence of this vain amusement. At a little social gathering the other evening this was the chief subject of conversation, and of course there was no time found for dancing. Still, there are those who do not like to give it up; and are disposed to say every thing possible in favor of their favorite recreation, so that we sometimes have quite a discussion, and argue with all our might. By the aid received from your letters, our side, however, generally comes off victorious, or at least our opponents are so nonplussed that they do not know what to say; but I rather think in their case the old proverb is verified, "He that is convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still."

There is one point, however, upon which I be-

lieve you have said nothing, namely, that dancing is an accomplishment, indispensable to the attainment of gentility. I really do not know what to say against those who urge its great importance in producing ease and gracefulness of manners. I am sure that stiffness, or even awkwardness, would be preferable to a want of moral purity; and I do not think the most exquisite gentility would excuse an act of immorality; nor do I see how any thing that excites vanity or haughtiness can render one truly polite.

If dancing is an accomplishment so essential in forming the manners, I should think those not initiated into this art would be very awkward and ungenteel; but I am sure I never observed any remarkable difference, in this respect, between the dancers and those who do not dance.

How much to the purpose is that quotation from Dr. Clarke, in showing what is really the influence of this amusement. A love of dress, and a dissatisfaction with what one has, and with the business that ought to be performed, I suppose, must be common with those who are absorbed in this method of receiving pleasure. I think Dr. Clarke's ideas on this subject

will have much influence. You also have had opportunity to learn the influence of dancing upon the character, as you have been much in the society of young people. You have presided over a family of young ladies, and had the best opportunity to decide whether the dancers are more distinguished than others for politeness, which is defined to be, "kindness kindly expressed"—more disposed to promote the happiness of the domestic circle, and more willing to deny themselves that others may be accommodated. I have often heard it said, that "it does not produce or express a feeling kindly, to place a foot, a hand, or the head, according to Lord Chesterfield's rules," so that I suppose we must look at something besides bodily motion for real politeness.

Do you recollect Mr. C——, a gentleman who had been travelling in Europe, that called upon you a year or two since? I remember his making what seemed to me then a very singular remark. The subject of dancing was mentioned, and he said that this amusement was not practised in the best society, either on this side of the Atlantic or the other. I thought that probably he was not admitted, at least in foreign lands, into the first circles, and

therefore could not certainly know this to be true. Whether this is so or not, it is very certain that, on this side the Atlantic, there are people of high standing who are not devoted to dancing. Still, there are persons of good judgment and true piety who seem to think it essential to a polite education, as, for instance, Miss J——, who has it taught in her seminary. I wish therefore you would give me your views on the subject as presented in this light.

In the quotation from Dr. Clarke is this remark, "No man in his senses will dance, says Cicero." Cicero was a heathen, and I thought all heathen nations approved of this amusement. I wonder whether Cicero, the renowned orator, was inferior to his countrymen in grace and elegance, and was opposed to that which would promote their refinement.

I have another question to propose. If the amusements most common are not what they should be, or are so practised as to produce evil results, still, as some kind of recreation is necessary for the health both of body and mind, ought not persons of experience and wisdom to give attention to the subject, and tell the poor ignorant ones how they shall amuse themselves?

There are many kinds of sports, I know, in which children find pleasure, and I have often been pleased with their ingenuity in contriving plays; but those that are older seem to need advice in respect to their recreations, as they often make great mistakes.

I have been led to these thoughts in contriving something to take the place of dancing in our evening circles. We do not care to practise gymnastics; and silly plays, I am sure, are not the thing for persons who have had the advantages for education that we have enjoyed, and who are now, many of us, out of our teens.

You used to recommend to your pupils, after leaving the seminary, the formation of societies among their associates, for improving their minds; and that at these meetings there should be reading selected from good authors, and also original pieces, or a paper sustained by the members of the circle.

All these things I have been considering, and I will tell you what I think we can do here. We can meet together one afternoon in a week and read something interesting and profitable, but I do not think it would be best to say any thing about having a paper, at least not at first.

That "Chaponian Society," which Mrs. R—— used to tell us about, of which she was a member in her youthful days, always interested me much. I often thought that when I left school, I would try to have something of the kind among my associates. I think these ladies called it the "Chaponian Society," from their admiration of Mrs. Chapone, an English writer whose "Letters to Young Ladies" they were accustomed to read, and from which they derived much profit and pleasure. I should infer that the members of this society were not as much given to the reading of stories as young people now are.

I do not know as very many of my companions here will be disposed to attend a reading circle; but there are a number who have finished their school education, that I think will be pleased with the plan. I have suggested it to three or four, who are willing to unite with me in making a beginning, and there are others that probably will soon join with us. Several have said they would like it very well if there was to be no writing. We propose to have a little music; and we shall soon obtain so many ideas which we wish to express to each other, that we may find pleasure as well

as improvement in exercising our conversational powers. At some future time our minds may become so well furnished, and our facility for expression so increased, that we can sustain a paper.

Now, my dear Miss Stanley, please give us some encouraging words, and also some advice in regard to the books we shall read. Your affectionate

MARIA.

LETTER VIII.

YOUR letter was to me full of interest. I rejoice to know that my Maria is not only decided in giving up amusements which have no good influence, but that she is intent on ascertaining what will be really beneficial, and also in earnest to induce her companions to seek pleasure in that which is worthy the attention of rational and immortal beings. It is indeed important that a right direction in regard to recreations should be given to those who are young and inexperienced. I have often been pained to hear mothers excuse themselves for indulging their children in going to places of vain amusement by saying, "I remember how it was with me when I was young, and children will be children; when they are older they will see the folly of it; they must learn by experience, as I did." This surely is not training up a child in the way he should go. Is it not permitting him to take the direction of his wayward nature, with the expectation that after discovering himself in the wrong course, he will seek to find the right way himself?

When I was about seventeen, a dancing-school was commenced in the place where we resided ; and I recollect saying to my school-mates, "I shall not go, because my parents do not think it right." A companion of mine, whose father was in favor of her attendance, was induced to decline through the influence of her mother, a woman eminent for piety and devotion to the best interests of her children. She, when consulted in reference to going to this school, took her Bible, and marking down the chapter and verse where passages are to be found in which the duty of parents to their children is plainly taught, gave the paper to her daughter, desiring her to turn to these passages and read them carefully. Then said she, "If in view of my obligation to follow these divine directions, you think it right for me, a Christian mother, to give you permission to attend the dancing-school, you may go." The young lady as directed perused carefully the scripture precepts, then laying aside her Bible, replied, "No, mother, I do not think you would do right in giving me this permission, and I shall not attend." The dancing-school went on, but this young lady was found at the prayer-meeting, instead of this place of

amusement. Her subsequent history is that she became a Christian while young, and as the wife of a clergyman has been and still is eminently useful.

That Mr. C—— whom you mention, I recollect; and I have recently heard him preach a sermon on the subject of amusements. In this he showed very plainly the inconsistency and evil influence of dancing. He said that among its supporters we should find those opposed to religion, missions, temperance; while among those by whom it is condemned may be found persons distinguished for piety, intelligence, and devotion to the cause of benevolence; in short, the brightest ornaments to society. He said also that dancing in ancient times was less objectionable than at present; that in the twenty places where it is mentioned in Scripture, there is not one instance where it is said to have been performed by both sexes together.

The greater the mental cultivation, the less the disposition to engage in trifling pursuits; hence the amusements in which persons most delight furnish a clue to the intellectual character. You will find an illustration of this in your efforts to induce your companions to unite

in a reading circle. Those who are intellectual will enter with interest into the plan, while the superficially educated will think an evening spent in reading must be very dull. I am however sure that you will find this method of social enjoyment very delightful, though I think it wise not to propose having a paper at first. It is a great change to have reading take the place of dancing. Music will add to the entertainment, and perhaps this may be an inducement for some to attend; but the idea of being required to compose something to be read before the circle would be quite startling, and furnish a reason to many for staying away.

In regard to the selection of reading, there are so many good books, that you may find it difficult to decide which to choose. Something interesting, pithy, and that will impress such thoughts as it is important for you always to remember, will of course be good. There are many books that contain useful hints, but of which it may be said that there is a bushel of chaff for a few kernels of wheat. Such would hardly be suitable for your circle, for at one reading you might get nothing but chaff. Hannah More has written much that is worthy of

very careful perusal; but I dare say your ladies would think her too dry. It will be necessary to consult the members of your circle in regard to the selection of reading, as concert of action is desirable; and you will find yourselves intent on sharing with each other the rich gems of thought that have rewarded your research in exploring the treasures of other minds.

It is desirable that your conversation should be connected with what you read, and that you should beware of gossip, scandal, and all this family of vices. The proper way to avoid this kind of intercourse, is to occupy the attention with subjects of importance; for "jealousy, envy, discontent, and love of scandal, are evil spirits that take possession of an empty mind." We hardly realize how great is the influence of conversation. Some one has said that "at home it does more to educate children than schools and colleges." It is therefore very necessary to cultivate the power of expressing ourselves with ease and beauty; and we cannot attain this ability without practice—not the practice of talking without thinking, but of entering with so much interest into the theme that there will be a natural flow of thought.

Your reading circle will present a very fine opportunity for the exercise of your conversational powers.

Perhaps you are not aware that dancing is contrary to the rules of our church, whose representative body, as you know, is not composed merely of ministers, but of laymen, some of them occupying stations of eminence in the state as well as in the church; and all evangelical denominations take essentially the same stand. It is not many years since a lady, for attending dancing-parties, was suspended from the church of which I was a member.

It is to me a very sad change that has come over the religious community; for what does it evince? Can it be regarded as an evidence of an increase of piety, of devotion to the service of Christ, and of deadness to the world? My hope is that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, with which many places in our land have been blessed, will produce a mighty renovation; so that meetings for religious conversation and prayer will take the place of dancing-parties, and Christians give evidence that they find their enjoyment in living for the glory of God and doing his will.

I have been reading something to-day very

strikingly illustrative of living for this blessed purpose; and I have received so much pleasure, that I think you will be interested in some account of it. It is the review of a work lately published, giving a history of the settlement in Pitcairn's island, or, as it is now denominated, "The Paradise of the Pacific." You recollect, perhaps, that this island was settled more than sixty years ago by the mutineers of the ship *Bounty*. These persons took with them some Otaheitan women, so that the colony was of rather a mixed character.

The part of the narrative, however, to which I wish to call your attention, is that which describes the great moral change in this people, and the means by which it was effected. After the death of all the mutineers but one, the last survivor, John Adams, having become a good and praying man, and possessing the treasure of one Bible, made known to the ignorant and vicious community around him its blessed truths. A father to this youthful group, he trained them up in the fear and love of God, morning and evening reading to them the sacred Scriptures, and bowing with them before the mercy-seat. They gave heed to his instructions, and by the simple teaching of these

divine oracles, the inhabitants of this island have become as happy a community as can be found in our world. This island, a mere speck in the wide waste of waters, rises a paradise from the ocean. Why is this? Because here God is feared and loved. "At night not an eye is closed without offering the heart's incense to their almighty Guardian."

I think the question might here be asked, whether we do not find in this island more real politeness than in the circles of fashion, and among those who thread the mazy dance in the splendid parlors of our cities. A visitor to the island says, "The dress-makers of London would be delighted with the simplicity and elegant taste of these untaught females." Another visitor, in his description, speaks of their "faces beaming with smiles, and wearing an air of modesty that would do honor to the most virtuous." "Harmony, simplicity, sincerity, cheerfulness, hospitality, contentment, affection to each other, and devotion to the duties of religion," are traits of character for which these people are distinguished. We may well inquire if these accomplishments are not superior to any that can be attained under the tuition of a Parisian dancing-master.

Your idea is very much to the purpose, that if dancing is so necessary to render one genteel, those poor damsels who have never learned to "step their minuets well," must be very uncouth in their manners. Perhaps one as destitute of these accomplishments as your teacher ought not to presume to decide so abstruse a point, but leave it to the decision of more able reasoners, the fashionables of the day. She will, however, hazard some thoughts.

It is very possible that one who has never danced might not turn her toes at quite the right angle, nor always lift the foot in exact time, nor give the scrape in the right direction, nor the fashionable squeeze in the proper place or with due force; indeed, she might not throw such fascinating glances, nor utter words in tones so soft and with such melting pathos as the belle of the ballroom. But whether she might not be as quick to hear a cry of distress, as prompt to relieve a suffering fellow-being, as gentle and kind in the chamber of sickness, or as sympathizing a friend to the mourner, is not so doubtful. Indeed, it is not at all improbable that she might eclipse the beautiful belle in a social circle; not exactly by turning her heels and toes according to the most

approved Parisian mode, but by her modest demeanor, her intellectual countenance, her flow of thought, and her brilliant conversational powers. That person is truly attractive whose face, while it beams with intelligence, is expressive of a warm, open, unselfish heart. Not attractive perhaps to a set of admirers whose only standard of excellence is the dress and the movements of the body, but attractive to those who estimate the character by the soul; who regard the mind as the true standard. A person distinguished for her moral and intellectual attainments, even though plainly attired, may be considered the accomplished lady, rather than the gay belle, splendidly arrayed in the latest fashion and decked with expensive ornaments, who, having no interest in conversation, thinks it very dull unless she can get up a cotillion or a polka. How really pitiable the condition of the poor restless creature, who seems to consider it quite impossible to endure the dulness of an evening without a dance.

This want of mental cultivation, this vacuity of thought, is what renders this amusement so desirable, as it gives an opportunity for the superficially educated to display their charms. An excitement is thus produced, relieving the

ennui of those who have few other attractions than these movements of the body by which to secure attention and excite admiration. Dancing is a contrivance to kill time; not indeed the only contrivance, but one among many by which to pass it away without thought or rational conversation. If such be the nature and use of this accomplishment, I would beg to be excused from acquiring it, and would risk the danger of being considered unfashionable and unpolished, rather than thus waste my precious moments, and hazard my immortal soul.

This idea that dancing is essential to a polite education results from a mistake in regard to what is really the nature of true politeness. Many seem to have no other idea of gracefulness of manners, than that it is the performance of various evolutions in the most approved style, as in military tactics. Addison, in some of his papers in the Spectator, with his usual keenness of sarcasm, throws ridicule upon this opinion. His directions for the use of the fan furnish a good illustration.

This kind of gentility is far from rendering one agreeable, for being practised only on particular occasions, the effort is apparent, and without ease there can be no gracefulness of

manners. In affecting airs and graces which are not natural, there is also danger of over-doing, and of becoming so exquisite in speech and action as to excite risibility, rather than gain the admiration so much desired. Genuine politeness is quite the opposite of this. Having its seat in the heart, there is nothing artificial in its exercise. It is not a mere compliance with forms to be used on certain occasions, as in the drawing-room with company, and laid aside in one's own family. It is true that those really polite will conform to all the customs of society, so far as they are in accordance with the great rule of right, doing this from a desire to promote the happiness of those with whom they associate. The old adage you recollect: "Politeness is kindness kindly expressed." Haughtiness, vanity, ill-temper, self-conceit, and all passions of which selfishness is the root, are therefore inconsistent with politeness; while humility, meekness, modesty, and benevolence are the graces of the soul, which produce gracefulness of manner. Those who from the heart comply with the gospel precepts, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," "Let each esteem other better than themselves," "Be kindly-affectioned one toward

another, in honor preferring one another," are persons of true politeness; while those who ceremoniously comply with such directions, without the heart, have not the spirit, but only the form of that which is so highly esteemed, and which, it is claimed by some, can only be attained by becoming an accomplished dancer.

It is true, indeed, that proficient in this accomplishment may be more at ease in fashionable society than those accustomed to mingle merely with a select circle of friends; for as their habits are formed in a crowded assembly, they become adepts in the varied round of ceremonies there deemed essential, and thus attain such a degree of boldness as renders them quite self-possessed. But the embarrassment felt by young persons when going into company may be prevented by their observing the rules of politeness at home. The taste must be cultivated, as well as a habit of attention, that one may be familiar with the customs of good society; while to think little of self, and much of rendering others happy, is the great secret of producing ease of manners in any company.

In large and mixed assemblages, persons

of either sex often practise arts to attract the other, and thus to secure admiration; these flattering attentions constituting the charm of these places of amusement. It is also to be feared, that in the exercise of these fascinations there is a loss of that delicacy which is a shining ornament of the character, as well as an infusion of such thoughts as pollute the soul.

That dancing in mixed assemblies does have a tendency to produce an impurity of mind, I once heard asserted by a lecturer on oriental customs; and he also spoke of it as a fact admitted by attentive observers in all nations. This declaration at first startled me, but it led me, in searching for its truth, to examine all the means of information to which I had access. With the result of my researches I will make you acquainted in another letter.

Before I close, I would suggest that probably your reading-circle would be interested in "The Paradise of the Pacific," by Rev. Mr. Murray. If you cannot obtain that, you can read the review, in the number for August, 1853, of the Eclectic.

Yours affectionately,

M. STANLEY.

LETTER IX.

MY DEAR MISS STANLEY:

At our reading circle on Thursday what do you think we read? Your letter had just been received, and as it was exactly what I wanted to say, I could not well do otherwise than give your words instead of my own. I have no doubt you think this was a wise course, much better than if your thoughts had come to the ladies of our circle second-hand. All were much gratified, and request me to ask you if they may not always enjoy this pleasure with me. After the reading, having received so many new ideas, we had an animated conversation, which I assure you was very pleasant.

We were greatly interested in your account of "The Paradise of the Pacific." Some of us recollected the story of its first settlement, but we knew nothing of its present state. I found the number of the Eclectic which you mentioned, and though we had reading selected, that was laid aside for the review. In the history of this little community, how clearly we can see that doing right makes one happy; and

that the true way to find the right is to study the Bible. I think some people in our own highly favored land might take lessons from these simple-hearted islanders.

What a treasure was that single Bible, and how much good was done by that one man, John Adams. What a kind providence too, that Mr. Nobbs was there, and ready to take the place of their teacher when he was removed by death.

In this narrative we find facts more wonderful than fiction. The state of things in this island comes nearer to my idea of a Utopian scene than any thing of which I have ever read. It really shows that those who go according to the Bible are the truly polite.

There were some things in your letter new to us all. We had no idea that dancing as an amusement had been so generally condemned by the various denominations of evangelical Christians. I knew that some of my friends, as well as yourself, thought it wrong to attend balls and dancing-parties. I also supposed that persons of the most eminent piety were of this opinion, so that I was surprised to find the members of the church here taking such a different stand, even the minister and deacons

approving of this amusement. I also heard not long since, that a minister who stands very high in the churches, sends his children to a dancing-school, and that in the city where he resides this amusement is common among pious people.

This difference of opinion among those who are professors of religion, after all that you have said by way of explanation, does seem very hard to understand. I suppose, however, that some religious people look only at reasons in favor of this exercise, and others at the evils connected with it, and so come to different conclusions. It seems to me that if the teachings of our Saviour were more studied, Christians, even if they thought it right to dance, would refrain from promiscuous dancing in view of its consequences, and if for no other reason, lest they should grieve the "little ones" that believe in Him.

I know it is often the case that if the father desires his children to acquire this accomplishment, the mother thinks it cannot be avoided. There are few mothers who exercise as much wisdom, and who act so fully in accordance with their sense of obligation, as the one you mentioned.

I have somewhere read, that Harriet Newell the missionary, who when a child had been carefully instructed by her pious mother, manifested at an early age much interest in religion, morning and evening reading the word of God, and engaging in secret prayer; but, that after attending the dancing-school in accordance with her father's wishes, these impressions were effaced, and for a time she was very thoughtless. One thing is, however, certain, that when she became a Christian she gave up all these amusements. If attending the dancing-school is necessary to gracefulness of manners, this certainly is attained at a great cost; for, as in the case of Harriet Newell, serious impressions are thus almost sure to be effaced. I should not think that those who are anxious for the conversion of their children, could be willing to put them under influences which are quite certain to prevent their most earnest desires from being realized.

I think what you say is very true, that the reason dancing is thought so essential to a polite education is because people have a wrong idea of what politeness is. I used to think it was doing things in a particular way, speaking soft, tripping very lightly, and looking prim,

and that I could put on these graces and lay them aside when I pleased. I am sure I did not think of its having any thing to do with the heart. I have often noticed that girls who are very rude at home make a great display in company. I do not think those in your school who were most fashionable, were distinguished for respect to their teachers, for they were very apt to be ringleaders in what was opposed to your wishes. There was that clique of young ladies from B——, who were so in love with this amusement that they could hardly get through a recess without a dance, yet they were noted for their disregard of the rules of propriety. They would be drumming with their fingers or feet, whispering and giggling among themselves, and no more graceful in their manners than other people.

An instance of this kind of rudeness I cannot help mentioning. Some people of this fashionable class, and one of them formerly a pupil in your school, were visiting at an uncle's. One evening these visitors suggested that as there was a piano they might have a dance. The uncle and aunt were pious and conscientious; they felt that they could not consistently give their consent, though they expressed re-

gret at being unable to gratify their young cousins. The visitors, however, were so intent upon having this pleasure, that they persisted in sitting up to a late hour, or until uncle and aunt found it necessary to retire, and then had their dance.

Another family of a similar character suffered a similar annoyance. The visitors, although they knew that the friends with whom they were staying disapproved of this amusement, yet without even asking permission, for nights in succession disturbed the family till a late hour by their music and dancing; and this they continued to do until requested to cease.

I am sure such politeness as this must be of a spurious kind. There may be suppleness of joints and muscles, but very little tenderness about the heart. The "kindness kindly expressed" seems to be wanting.

I anticipate much from your next letter.
Your own

MARIA.

LETTER X.

MY DEAR MARIA:

Yours was duly received and read with pleasure. I do not object to my letters doing all the good they can; and if your companions are interested in the subject of our correspondence, I am not unwilling they should be read in your circle.

I promised, I believe, to give you a history of dancing, and to show how it has been regarded in its influence upon character. We have seen that in ancient nations it was performed as an act of religious worship, and as such was practised by the most reverential, and therefore the most worthy. Being, however, a natural expression of gladness, it became a common method of giving vent to joyful emotions, and therefore, in accordance with the disposition of the heart, was employed either as an amusement or an act of worship. This, we discover, was the case among the Hebrews; for Michal, endeavoring to throw odium upon the religious exultation of David, compares him to the "vain fellows" who shame-

lessly uncover themselves; alluding evidently to those who for amusement engaged in this exercise, and the manner in which it was performed. Also in the book of Job, the children of those who contemn God, or who say, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?" are said to dance, also to "take the timbrel and harp, and to rejoice at the sound of the organ." The dance of the daughter of Herodias was of this character. It was evidently performed for the amusement of the company, and the request in which she united with her mother indicates that all were under the influence of unholy passions.

In Greece, dancing was employed in the worship of the gods; and Apollo was considered as presiding over this exercise, as well as over music and other fine arts. Jupiter is even said to have been the first dancing-master. The character of the god worshipped had however an influence upon that of the people, and of course upon the manner in which this ceremony of religious worship was performed. At the same time there was a reflex influence; the character of the people indicating the character they believed their god to possess, and the vices to which they were addicted leading them

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to ascribe such attributes to their deities as were in accordance with the desires of their corrupt hearts, probably that the commission of evil deeds might be excused or looked upon with approbation. Thus Bacchus was the protector of drunkards, and Mercury of thieves; and we hence perceive that the particular cast of character and taste for pleasure had an influence upon religious ceremonies, and these again upon national character.

That there was a great difference between the Dorians and Ionians, is apparent in tracing the history of Athens and Sparta, the leading cities of these two races. This is discovered in reading any Grecian history; but Müller, a late German historian, makes the contrast more striking than we should infer from the histories which are commonly used. The Spartans, the representatives of the Doric race, we know from the account we have of the laws of Lycurgus, were a people of amazing self-control and self-denial. Müller says they were much more moral than the Athenians; and this certainly it is not hard to admit, for the Athenians had the pleasure-loving taste which was a marked feature of the Ionians. It is true that the worship of Minerva the goddess of

wisdom must have imparted an elevating influence, which rendered them superior to other branches of this race. The Ionians of Western Asia were devoted to luxurious pleasures; and the Diana worshipped by the Ephesians was of such a character, that her festivals were the "gala of licentious passions;" while the Diana of the Spartans was the goddess of chastity, and of course devotion to her must have tended to cherish this virtue.

The worship of Bacchus, the god of wine, was attended with orgies which sometimes became so intolerable, that laws were passed against them. The word Bacchanalian, derived from Bacchus, indicates the character of these rites. In Cyprus, Venus was the presiding deity, and to this day effeminacy and licentiousness are a characteristic of this people.

Apollo was the presiding deity of the Doric race. He, you will recollect, was the god of music and of all elegant exercises. He is represented as the "embodiment of genius," "the perfection of order, harmony, and proportion." Apollo and Diana were the children of Jupiter, and looked upon as the manifestation of his divinity to man. Apollo was believed to

reside at Delphi, and hence that famous temple and oracle, which was visited by all Greece and Western Asia for the purpose of consulting this god and becoming acquainted with his will. Apollo is represented in mythology as visiting the Hyperboreans, a nation very dear to him, and dancing and playing with them from the vernal equinox to the early setting of the Pleiades, then returning to Delphi with their offerings, the full ripe ears of corn, the first fruits of their land.

If the gods were believed to engage in such exercises, it was natural that music and dancing should be employed by the Spartans in their worship; but with their estimation of the character of Apollo and Diana, and with the control of the animal appetites and passions, considered by them so noble, we can easily admit that these exercises must have been very different in their influence from what they were when expressive of the softer passions or of the amorous feelings. The beautiful god, Apollo was represented "with his harp in hand, leading the muses and mingling in the dance;" and in his worship the music which accompanied the dance was "an ode or an address to the gods, calculated to compose and clear the

mind, to soothe and calm the spirits, not to touch and excite the passions;" their thoughts and movements all aiming to be in accordance with their god, "as the standard by which all their activity was measured." This, it would seem, furnishes an example of dancing of an elevated and intellectual character, or the music of motion combined with that of sound, very unlike that performed for mere amusement, and so exciting to the amorous feelings as to have a corrupting influence. It was a religious use of this exercise, but quite a contrast to that performed in the worship of Bacchus and Venus.

But among the Greeks as well as the Hebrews, dancing was not only performed in religious worship; it was also resorted to as an amusement. In Athens, so renowned for her poets, sculptors, architects, and painters, we find a class of women distinguished for their expertness in dancing and music. Selected probably on account of exquisite beauty of form and feature, they were better educated than other females, receiving a knowledge of all the accomplishments art could bestow. This seemed to be for the purpose of fitting them to minister to the pleasure of the nobler sex;

and so fascinating were their manners and so irresistible their attractions, as to draw around them philosophers, poets, and orators. To some of these beautiful beings, contemporary with Socrates and Plato, we are introduced by the historian ; as for instance, *Lais*, *Callisto*, *Nico*, and *Aspasia*. You recollect *Aspasia*, fascinating by her charms not only *Pericles*, but the wise *Socrates* himself. Of *Lais* it was said, "She is the one woman in Greece who carries all before her." When we inquire for the moral character of this class of females, we learn that they were called *Hetærae*, or, as we should say, courtesans. With dancing was combined the power of music ; and these arts, rendered still more exciting to the amorous passions by scanty costume, lascivious looks and gestures, were used to lure the unwary to deeds of which it is a shame to speak. So notorious was the immorality of this class of females, that even among heathen they could not be respected ; and the profession of a dancer was, according to *Plato*, looked upon as "low and disgraceful." The attention paid by *Pericles* to *Aspasia*, for a time, it is said, removed something of the odium attached to the *Hetærae*, thus rendering vice more reputable and

producing a deeper corruption among the people. This profession belonged exclusively to females, probably because women were considered as especially designed to minister to the pleasure of the nobler sex, or perhaps because they were capable of becoming more captivating charmers. Plato, however, objects to this kind of amusement, and suggests that persons capable of higher enjoyments, such, for instance, as intellectual conversation, should not suffer themselves to become absorbed in pleasures calculated merely to inflame the passions. The Hetærae seem to have been a resource for those who had little enjoyment at home; and probably Socrates, worn out by the scolding of his wife Xantippe, found a pleasant relief in the society of Aspasia.

Females generally, even in Athens, were uneducated, therefore greatly inferior to the other sex, and unfitted for companionship with men of philosophic mind and refinement of taste; hence we discover, as the Hetærae were some of them highly educated, why their society was sought by men of this class. We are also taught the importance of cultivation of mind to the female, and that the duty of woman is to acquire such a character as will enable her to

make home happy ; her aim ever being to render this spot the centre of her attractions, instead of seeking to fascinate an admiring throng in the splendid scenes of dissipation.

Luxurious entertainments denominated symposia, were common in most Grecian cities, as for instance, in Athens and Corinth. At these feasts, where was great excess in eating and drinking, these professional dancers were introduced to heighten the pleasure by the exercise of their charms. How strikingly do the directions of St. Paul to the Corinthians indicate such a state of morals as would be a natural result of this indulgence in sensual pleasures. After enumerating many flagrant and abominable vices, he adds, addressing those who had accepted the plan of salvation through a crucified Saviour, "And such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Again he says, "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner ; with such a one no not to eat." At the same time the universality of such practices is strikingly

apparent from his words: "Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world."

In Italy, as in Greece, dancing was used in religious worship, and also as an amusement; still, the Romans, in the early period of their history, were distinguished for simple and industrious habits; and like the Spartans, to excel in military glory seemed their highest ambition. The circumstances connected with the death of Lucretia show that chastity was regarded as a priceless ornament to the female, and that industry as well as chastity, was a marked trait in the character of this noble woman, this being the virtue which excited the admiration of the wretch that wrought her ruin. On this occasion, at a late hour in the night, instead of being engaged in a scene of festive amusement, she was found spinning with her maids.

How debasing the influence of one who lives merely for the gratification of the passions; but how ennobling to devote one's self to the duties of life, to be the true woman, the light of that domain which she alone can render bright and happy. Thais the courtesan of earth's greatest conqueror, and Cornelia the

mother of the Gracchi—how great the contrast in the acts which have given them a place on the historic page: the one for instigating the burning of Persepolis, the other for regarding her sons as her jewels, and training them for her country's service.

As the power of Rome increased, and her sway extended beyond the limits of the Italian peninsula, a great change came over the character of her citizens. When the empire of Macedon yielded to her arms, and Egypt and Carthage became her tributaries, while the rich and populous countries of Asia were subservient to her power, and the wealth of the East was poured into her treasury, then it was that this mighty people sunk under the influence of luxury and its attendant vices. The stern, inflexible Roman, whom no danger could terrify, no power of arms overthrow, yielded to the soft embrace of pleasure. It is true, that Rome stood forth for centuries the proud mistress of the world, her sway extending from the Euphrates to the Atlantic, and from the deserts of Africa on the south to unknown regions on the north; but at length corruption reaches her vitals, and rapid is her decline. Her emperors take the lead in sensual indul-

gence, and her senate are enslaved by the army ; while the strength of her armies are the mercenary barbarians of the north. By repeated invasions her power is shaken, till at length the Goths and Vandals triumph, and this mighty empire falls.

During this downward course, the attentive reader of history cannot fail to discover that sensual gratification was the one great object, to which her inhabitants of all classes and conditions were devoted ; one feast following another in quick succession, so that revelry and excess seem the all-absorbing business of this pleasure-loving people. At these feasts music and dancing contribute to the enjoyment, tending to inflame the passions, and heighten the disposition to indulge in every kind of excess. Hence the sarcastic rebuke of the wise Cicero : "No sober man dances, except perchance a madman or a fool." He, it must be admitted, was one wise man among hosts of madmen or fools.

Previous to the time of Cicero so fearful had been the influence of bacchanalian orgies, or ceremonies performed in the worship of Bacchus, that by order of the Senate they had been forbidden. This act of government no doubt checked the prevalence of these orgies,

but revellings of some character continued, and dancing was still practised, as appears from this denunciation of Cicero. After a time, however, this kind of amusement went into disrepute, probably was superseded by gladiatorial combats, as in the time of Trajan it seems to have been laid aside, these combats at the same time drawing together spectators by thousands. After the abolition of gladiatorial combats, a kind of dancing was resumed. It was, however, performed only by men, and had something of the pantomime character.

Dancing practised by both sexes was first introduced into France in the reign of Louis XIV., in the seventeenth century. It was the fashionable entertainment at court, and hence, among this pleasure-loving people, it soon became the favorite amusement of all classes, and on all occasions, public as well as private. From this time France, but especially Paris her grand emporium, has sent, and continues to send forth troops of dancing-masters, to propagate this art in other lands. In its performance she, however, bears away the palm. A question which naturally arises is, whether this amusement has had any influence upon the morals of this nation. This of course it does

not seem our province to decide ; still, there can be no impropriety in inquiring what are the morals of this people. The testimony of one who has had much opportunity to become acquainted with the character of French society, shall furnish the reply. "A virtuous woman here is the exception, not the rule, and one-third of the children are of uncertain parentage."* We may therefore infer that this amusement has not had a very purifying influence.

Still it is true, that the people of this our highly favored land feel it necessary to import from France a set of teachers to form the manners of their youth, and to initiate them into graces that are to furnish their passport into fashionable society. Hence "a swarm of needy adventurers, like the locusts of the Egyptian plague," infest our shores, stinting the growth of right principles, blighting the buds of virtue, and tending, it would seem, to produce a moral desolation, instead of the rich harvest for which our fathers toiled.

In my next I will speak of changes in our country which I myself have witnessed.

Your affectionate friend.

* Dr. Baird.

LETTER XI.

MY DEAR FRIEND :

Your letter contained many things quite new to me, and of great interest. I had no idea that dancing was ever regarded by heathen people as Plato and Cicero looked upon it, or that its influence was ever thought so evil. I knew that Aspasia, while very much admired and sought after on account of her accomplishments, was still thought not to be very virtuous. I did not, however, know that she belonged to a class of dancing-girls; nor did I know the name given to that class of females. This most certainly shows what their character was, and I do not wonder that Plato thought the profession "low and disgraceful."

I have known the French to be distinguished for the practice of dancing, and at the same time not remarkable for virtue. I never thought, however, of putting these two facts together, or supposed there was any connection between them; still, judging from what we know of the influence of this amusement as now practised, I see no reason why it may not be considered one cause of the prevalence of immorality. The

French are very excitable, and their passions easily moved; dancing therefore may have a greater influence upon them than upon those of a more phlegmatic temperament; and this susceptibility of feeling may also account for their excelling in this accomplishment.

From your letter, I have been led to see what must be one of the advantages resulting from the study of history. As human nature is everywhere the same, the same causes will be likely to produce the same effects; and the history of one nation may therefore give lessons of practical wisdom to another. In perusing the annals of past ages, the rocks and quicksands upon which others have been wrecked may thus be discovered, and people may be led to avoid such a course as exposes to these dangers.

I was struck with the view which you gave of the Roman empire, and the consequences which resulted from an enlargement of territory, and an increase of wealth and power. I knew the history before, but I never saw the events in their philosophical relations, nor did I ever think that by "the decline and fall" of this empire a voice of warning is given, to which modern nations would do well to take heed.

The reading of history is certainly very important, and needs to be continued after one's school-days are over. When I think what a large field here lies open before me, I feel a kind of hopelessness in regard to the accomplishment of my desires. Although I studied history, both ancient and modern, at school, it hardly seems as if I knew any part of it thoroughly.

I delight in the long winter evenings, when we can spend them in reading. My sister and myself have been going over D'Aubigné's History of the Reformation again, and we have found it intensely interesting. I think the second reading of a book more pleasant than the first. It is like conversing with an old friend.

Your letter recalled many of my historic associations, and Rollin came quite fresh before me. The contrast between the Dorians and Ionians interested me much. I always had a great admiration of the Spartan character, and was quite delighted with the testimony of Müller in regard to their superiority. The names of some of these noble women are impressed on my memory. How admirable the conduct of Archidamia, when she exclaims, "Deliberate not, O men of Sparta, where we are to fly, but

what we are to do;" and when, with her country-women, she goes heartily to work in digging a trench, by which the city is saved. Cratesiclea always impressed me as evincing a spirit more truly Christian than many who make a profession of faith, when, although in the deepest affliction, she says to her son, "King of Lacedemon, let us dry our tears, that no person may see us weep or do any thing unworthy of Sparta; for this is in our power—events are in the hands of the gods."

We see, in this part of Grecian history, an illustration of the benefit of self-denial, and of the habit of self-control. What a contrast between Cratesiclea and Aspasia; the one impressing so pure an influence on the king of Lacedemon, the other so dark a stain on the man having greatest power in Athens.

I was not aware that the character ascribed to the same god differed so much, and was so much in accordance with that of the people. It was in this way, I suppose, an excuse was sought for sin by lowering the character of the being they worshipped, and believing him like themselves. I wonder if people in a Christian land are not guilty of the same error.

While thinking of the benefit of self-denial

and earnest effort, I could not help fancying that our pilgrim fathers were made better by this means. They had a great cross to take up in leaving their native land, and in exchanging the comforts of a refined and plentiful home for all the hardships of a life in the wilderness. And then, had they entered upon the prairies of the West instead of the rocky soil of New England, it is doubtful whether they would have had that strength of character which they impressed upon their children—that mighty energy by which obstacles seemingly insurmountable were overcome, and a foundation laid for the enjoyment of privileges both civil and religious throughout our fair land.

We have been reading in our circle the “History of New England” by Morse and Parish, and this has quite enkindled our admiration for our pilgrim fathers. Truly it was in the fear of God that they set up their banners. “Prayer and pains through faith in Christ,” explains the secret of their success; and this must have been the watchword of many a Christian hero, as well as of Eliot the devoted missionary to the Indians.

Much do I anticipate from your next letter.

Your own

MARIA.

LETTER XII.

As usual, your letter was a source of pleasure. I love to discover in my dear Maria an increasing degree of thought, and a disposition to exercise her reasoning powers in drawing lessons of practical instruction from what she reads and studies.

I promised in this letter to say something of the changes which I have witnessed in our country. I have indeed been permitted to live in an age marked with great and soul-stirring events—events which have put a new face upon the world; and in this march of improvement, I think it may truly be said, that our new and rising nation has led the way.

The nineteenth century will ever stand forth on the page of history, as a period remarkable for the achievements of human genius. The much that has been accomplished for the convenience and comfort of man by the invention of labor-saving machines is truly wonderful, while the application of steam as a propelling agent has given an expedition that outruns all calculation. In all the departments

of labor, from the cultivation of the ground to the printing of books and the manufacture of the various fabrics for use or beauty, the laborer may almost be said to stand still and see the work performed to his liking. Space too, in a measure, seems annihilated, as the majestic vessel skims over the sea, and the thundering train flies through the land; while, more wonderful still, the electric fluid transmits messages with the speed of lightning.

Our country meanwhile has been so enlarged in territory, that instead of the Mississippi being her western boundary, her sway now extends from ocean to ocean. At the same time, a golden tide has swept over our land, so that our young nation stands forth as distinguished for wealth as for extent and power.

In contemplating this progress in temporal advantages, we may well inquire what has been done for man's nobler part, the soul. Here we perceive a progress no less wonderful. Under the influence of the free institutions established by our fathers, and secured to us by their self-denying energy and determined resistance to the hand of tyranny, great are the privileges here enjoyed for intellectual

and moral improvement; and the aspect of our country, as we survey its assembled millions, gives evidence that a great work is here being carried on for man's higher nature, and that in this respect we are a people above all others most highly favored.

Little did our pilgrim sires imagine the mighty results that would follow their struggling efforts for the glory of God and the good of their posterity, while, pleading for the blessing, they levelled the forest, and the church and the school-house went up together. The blessing was granted, even beyond the greatest measure of their faith. The prediction seems here to have been verified, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Our young nation this day stands first on the globe for the general diffusion of intelligence, and for the means of improvement being more fully within the reach of the masses of the population than in any other. The Bible, that charter of all our hopes, both for time and for eternity, is accessible to all.

In no respect is progress more apparent than in the increase of advantages for the education of woman, and the change in public sentiment in favor of her enjoying these advan-

tages. Time was, when to read and write was deemed sufficient learning for her; but now it is her privilege to pursue a thorough course of study. She may receive her diploma in the seminary and the college; nor is the improvement of her mind found to interfere with her domestic duties, or to render her a being less worthy of love. How elevated the condition of our sex in this highly favored land. How great the contrast between the station woman here occupies, and that of her sisters in those parts of the world still enveloped in the darkness of heathenism, under the influence of the false prophet, or even of a corrupt Christianity; and how fully may she thus discover what she owes to the gospel of Christ, the religion of the Bible. It is this blessed influence that has elevated our country; we are the people highly favored above others, because the volume of inspiration is open to all, and the heralds of salvation proclaim its glorious truths through the length and breadth of our land.

The period in which I have been permitted to live seems the dawn of that glorious era which the beloved disciple in apocalyptic vision saw, marked by the flight of the angel in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting

gospel to preach unto "every nation and kindred and tongue and people." Near the close of the last century, Christians in the old world, moved by the Spirit of God, had united in great organizations for spreading abroad the blessings of salvation, and already were the missionaries of the cross proclaiming these glad tidings in Asia, Africa, and the isles of the sea.

"Westward the star of empire takes its way." Not only "the star of empire," but the "Star in the east" which the wise men saw, the harbinger of peace to guilty man, has penetrated the darkness of the "new world," and here sheds its heavenly light. The children of those who, for "freedom to worship God," had left their pleasant homes in the old world and sought these far-off western wilds, having obtained this blessed privilege, constrained by love and desirous that all might know this glorious salvation, stand up together to extend the dominion of the Prince of peace.

The commencement of the nineteenth century forms an epoch in the annals of Christian enterprise which brightens the page of history; "it will be memorable to all posterity for the formation of institutions whose benevolent

and sublime design is to unseal the fountain of life, and with joy to impart water from the wells of salvation to the millions who are ready to perish." In obedience to the command of their ascending Redeemer, under their respective banners, the people of God have united in sending forth heralds of the cross, to publish the gospel of Christ, and to enable the ignorant and benighted to "hear in their own tongues the wonderful works of God."

The time is within my remembrance when those devoted young men at Williamstown, under the shadow of the hay-stack, consecrated themselves to the service of Christ in pagan lands, thus leading to the formation of the American Board of Foreign Missions and of the Baptist Missionary Board. How many have thus been enabled to preach Christ to the heathen, and how glorious the results that have attended their labors. Many are the combinations that have followed, and many the heralds of the cross that have left our shores, or have gone to the benighted on our own continent to publish the glad tidings of salvation. To me it has been most interesting to follow these missionaries of the cross to their far-off homes across the mighty deep, and to

become acquainted with their efforts to pour light into the darkened mind. A privilege has it been to aid in the promotion of this glorious work, and to receive the glad tidings of the triumphs of the gospel: that dark and benighted souls are enlightened from above, the idols cast away, and temples raised to the living God; the Saviour embraced by thousands, and nations born into the kingdom of the Redeemer. "What hath God wrought," even in the course of my short life! The wilderness and the solitary place have been made glad, and the desert has rejoiced and blossomed as the rose.

The Holy Spirit, moving upon the hearts of thousands, "has shed abroad a Saviour's love." The voice of God has been heard; and many, when riches have been swept away, instead of seeking to dissipate their grief by sensual pleasure, have been seen wending their way to the place of prayer and humbly bowing at the mercy-seat. Far and wide has this blessed influence extended—in the crowded marts of our commercial emporium, in cities, villages, hamlets, and among the scattered population of our hills and valleys. Glorious have been the results, and still the work goes on.

Multitudes have come out from the world and declared themselves on the Lord's side. The great and the gay, the stern man and the tender and delicate woman, grey-haired sires and matrons, with the bright-eyed youth in the full bloom of beauty; in short, many from all classes have entered into covenant with God. The devotees of fashion and of mammon have declared their willingness to renounce all for Christ, and to consecrate themselves wholly to his service.

May those who have taken the vows of God upon them depart from iniquity, being no more conformed to the world, but transformed by the influence of the Holy Spirit into the likeness of their Redeemer. As "chosen pleasures reveal the state of the heart," we must infer that those who are really new creatures in Christ Jesus, cannot from choice engage in any business or pleasure which puts God out of the thoughts. Those whose hearts are imbued with the love of holiness can surely have no relish for that which is deadening to the spiritual life, which chills the affections, and draws them away from the Saviour. Can those who have set their faces heavenward be willing to use their wealth and their influence in helping onward

the machinations of Satan; and instead of promoting the salvation of the soul, to become instruments of its destruction? Parents who have consecrated themselves to God, feeling their obligation to train up their children in his service, will surely beware of exposing these immortal beings to influences so soul-destroying as scenes of vain amusement.

In the great and glorious work to be accomplished by the instrumentality of the people of God, it is the privilege of woman to bear an important part, and much depends upon the stand now taken by her. If her heart is moved, and she is ready to take up the cross, renouncing all for Christ's sake, men will not be wanting to fill the ranks of Christian heroes, going everywhere to preach the gospel. If she is willing to give up fashionable excess and selfish devotion to dress and display, scenes of frivolity and extravagance will fail for want of participants. Let Christian women deny themselves; and instead of lavishing wealth and time to meet the demands of fashion, let them use all their talents for God;—then will the silver and the gold be poured into the treasury of the Lord, and the messengers of the cross will go ev-

everywhere publishing the glad news of salvation.

That my dear Maria and her companions may have the spirit of Him who, "though rich, for our sakes became poor," is the prayer of their affectionate friend,

M. STANLEY.

LETTER XIII.

MY visit to my dear teacher, how much I did enjoy it, though it was so short that the time was gone before we had begun to speak of half the things I wished. But the letter that you put into my hands when leaving was a rich treat on my way home. You would have been pleased could you have looked in on our reading circle while it was read. Our number has increased, and I believe it is from a desire to hear your letters.

The view that you gave of the rising glory of our nation was listened to with deep interest. What mighty changes have been effected by the genius of man, and what an influence has thus been exerted upon the condition of our sex. How much more time we can have for the improvement of the mind, than if we had to spin and weave our clothes; and now the sewing-machine is greatly lessening the labor of making them. With privileges such as we now enjoy, how great are the obligations that rest upon us; and the question naturally arises, whether the women of this age are as

much superior to those of olden time as their advantages. I lately came across this remark, which, if true, is very sad: "In a solid, well-measured education, woman is not now as much in advance of her predecessors as her opportunities for advancement." The reason given for this failure was, that "women live in the song and the dance, and melt away in a dreamy sentimentalism, when they ought to be intent on storing the mind with facts and principles, in becoming acquainted with standard authors, and learning how to turn their attainments to good and wise purposes." I desire to beware of every thing that shall hinder my progress in what will fit me to be a good and useful woman, and the ladies of our circle all express the same feeling. -

This is truly a wonderful age, and how great the privilege to be permitted to live in such a period, and in a country so highly favored; but we should ever bear in mind that where much is given, much will be required.

It seems to me I never before had much thought of the power of woman's influence. It is indeed a talent on the right improvement of which, and the manner in which it is exercised, amazing consequences depend; for to her

is committed the formation of character, and the setting in motion of those springs that move a nation. How true it is that the approbation of woman is necessary to render any thing popular; that her smile or frown sways the multitude as the wind moves the mighty forest. How soon would the spirit of extravagance that so universally prevails be checked, if she would array herself against it; and how sad that, instead of this, she seems intent upon being first in every kind of profusion. Children too are trained in the same habits of self-indulgence; and judging from the richness of their attire, the sums expended for their dress and ornaments cannot be small. How much they think of what they wear, and how vain they are of fine clothes, is plain to every one.

If we may learn lessons of practical wisdom from history, I think it would be well to take heed to the teachings suggested in tracing the rise and fall of the Roman empire. There is a great resemblance between our rising republic and that of Rome, in increase of territory and advancement in wealth and power; and there may be a reasonable apprehension of a resemblance in a downward course; especially

as the same disposition to extravagance and luxurious indulgence is now as plainly discernible in the people of our land, as it was in the inhabitants of that empire during the period of her decline. Luxury and vice are a natural result of yielding to the selfish passions, and the influence of Christianity can alone prevent this indulgence. I see nothing that can save our nation from this downward course, but a general diffusion of the gospel and the influences of the Holy Spirit. There is in this respect a great difference between the Roman empire and our own fair land; for although, in the age of the apostles, Christ was preached in all the countries subject to the power of Rome, yet the condition of the great mass of the people must have been similar to what it is in pagan nations where missionaries are laboring at the present day—great ignorance and idolatry still prevailing, though many have embraced the truth as it is in Jesus. Christians were not under the protection of the law, and in ten fearful persecutions the emperors sought to sweep them from the earth. When Christianity was brought into favor by Constantine and Theodosius, still there was great ignorance of God's word, for copies of the Bible could only be

multiplied by the slow process of transcribing, the art of printing being then unknown.

The only hope there can be for our country is, that people of all classes and conditions may be made acquainted with the word of God. Not only should missionaries be sent to every part of the home field, but the colporteur, with the precious treasures of divine truth, should find his way to every hamlet and benighted settlement in our land. How important too, that Christians live the religion they profess, not indulging in the extravagance, luxury, and frivolity that mark the age, but using the wealth so bountifully bestowed upon them, in extending the kingdom of the Redeemer.

How desirable that, with an increase of wealth, we should increase in efforts to give that gospel which has so exalted our nation to every creature under heaven. May the wonderful inventions which have so annihilated space and brought the world together, be instrumental in uniting the nations in the bonds of the gospel. How sad that the abundant means here enjoyed for doing good should be lavished upon ourselves, and used for the gratification of selfish passions. I think I never before realized so fully my obligation to con-

secrete all I am and have to the service of the Redeemer. May I be enabled to resist every temptation that would draw me away from this blessed Friend; and may I never bring dishonor upon his glorious cause.

Our reading circle is having a very happy influence. I think the members begin to feel that vain amusements and costly attire are not as necessary to their pleasure as they had imagined. They no longer attend dancing parties.

Your affectionate

MARIA.

LETTER XIV.

DEAR MARIA :

The past three days have been to me so full of enjoyment, that I must, before entering upon any other topic, give an expression to the feelings awakened by the wondrous scene which, for the first time, I have been permitted to behold.

I have visited the cataract of Niagara, and my soul has been ravished with that wonderful display of the majesty and power of God. I have drank in such sweet draughts of delight that the aching senses seemed incapable of receiving more.

I wonder not that so few attempt to describe that which so fully mocks the power of description. It is not the height of the cataract that strikes the mind of the beholder: it is the mighty, foaming, tumbling mass of waters ever pressing onward and onward. Emotions of vastness, immensity, force, and power fill the soul, and raise it above itself; while the beautiful, everywhere mingled with the sublime, comes in to its relief, and diffuses a pleasing serenity. The variety also is pleasing, as the

view is taken from different points of observation. Now one is filled with admiration at the torrent of crystals pouring down into the abyss below ; then the eye is delighted with the sheet of foam rolling over the mighty precipice, and again charmed as its majestic drapery of emerald hue falls gracefully from the overhanging height. Now you gaze upon the snow-white vapor towering to the heavens, and are thrilled with delight by the rainbow tints blended in the foaming mass. As the scene is surveyed from below, the mighty amphitheatre rising before you, encircling this world of waters, mocks the pride of human grandeur, and casts into the shade all the efforts of man's puny genius. A God, a God of majesty and might, is proclaimed by the foaming cataract, and reëchoed by its thundering roar ; while the rainbow of promise speaks the God of the covenant, the covenant of mercy to a guilty world.

As I stood before this scene of inimitable grandeur, I could not but exclaim, Come hither, unbeliever, and gaze at Niagara's swelling flood ; look upward at this mountain torrent - and say, "Hast thou an arm like God?" Stand still, be silent, and adore. And you, trembling believer, as your soul is filled with a sense of

the majesty and power of the infinite Creator, know that this awful God is yours, your Father and your Friend. These are indeed but "parts of His ways;" this wondrous display of his beauty and might but faintly shadows forth Him who is the perfection of all beauty, of all might, a faint emblem of Him in whom "all fullness dwells."

I could not, dear Maria, but give you some of my thoughts while surveying this wondrous scene, but you must see it yourself to realize its influence upon the mind. I think it does one's soul good. I feel aroused; and while more deeply impressed with a sense of my own littleness, the infinite power and love of a covenant God is delightfully realized, and I am assured that his strength shall be made perfect in my weakness. I hope that you too will soon have the privilege of enjoying the same scene.

Although man's works are insignificant in comparison, yet the suspension bridge, one of the most wonderful of his inventions, strikes the beholder with amazement.

And now, my dear Maria, I must tell you what a source of pleasure your letter was to me. I rejoice that you enter with so much interest into my suggestions, and seem to receive

even more benefit than I anticipate. It is pleasant to carry on this correspondence with you, and I sometimes think it will be more useful to us both than if we could orally communicate our thoughts.

It is a sad truth that many who profess to be travelling to the heavenly city, allured by the great enemy of souls, stray into forbidden paths, the deviation from the narrow way seeming but slight, and the reasons suggested for this departure very plausible. Thus do they fall into sin like the pilgrim Tender-conscience, who is drawn out of his way in the very sight of the cross, and allured into the house of Mirth, where he takes the opiates of Intemperance, dallies with Miss Wantonness, and goes to sleep in the arms of Miss Forgetfulness. He indeed escapes from the dwelling of Carnal Security, but many there are who do not awaken from their dream of pleasure until for ever too late.

"Flee youthful lusts," is one divine precept, and, "Resist the devil," another; it would therefore seem that different kinds of temptation require to be differently met. When our passions and appetites are the instruments of the tempter, we may not listen, nor even look upon the objects forbidden. Thus Eve should

have avoided the "tree of knowledge" instead of gazing upon its fruit; and when the serpent suggested that there would be an advantage in disobeying the divine command, she should have fled from the tempter, and deigned him no reply.

Old Bunyan says, "The soul may stand in battle against adversities, persecutions, crosses, and the like, but the pleasures of the flesh must be subdued by retreating from them." The command is, "Flee youthful lusts;" avoid them as a plague, run away from them. Any company, employment, or amusement, that endangers the welfare of the soul, must be shunned; nor should any heed be given to those who would, by ridicule, or by entreaty, weaken our resolutions, and induce us to engage in that which we know to be a hinderance in our progress to the heavenly city. How much better to be regarded as puritanical than to sin against God, and ruin our own souls. How watchful should the Christian be, how careful to study the directions of his heavenly Leader, and to pray for the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

I took up the other day, and read with great interest, an old edition of what was called a third part of "Pilgrim's Progress." It con-

tains a fund of useful thoughts, especially unfolding the varied temptations which allure from the path of duty, and against which there must be a constant guard. The strait and narrow way is clearly marked out, and also the by-paths in which many have perished. The names of the pilgrims are illustrative of their characters; and the traits so clearly portrayed, help one to see the many ways in which she may go astray, aiding her to obtain a knowledge of her own heart, and of the sin that most easily besets her. Thus Yielding gives way to the allurements of Vanity Fair, and miserably perishes. Weary-of-the-world passes for a good pilgrim all the way to the river of Death; but it is not love to God that leads him to give up the world, it is impatience with the troubles of this life; and when he reaches the river he plunges in unbidden, and sinks to rise no more. Zealous-mind is very forward and apparently very religious, but his dependence is on himself and not on his Saviour. In the river, seeking to buoy himself up with a bundle of reeds, or in other words resting upon his own righteousness, he too sinks in the deep waters, and fails to reach the Celestial City. On the other hand, Tender-

conscience, Seek-truth, Convert, and Spiritual-man, looking upward for aid, are borne across the dark waters and convoyed by angels to a world of glory.

How true, that when we are much interested in a subject, we often meet that which seems greatly to aid us in its investigation. I now scarce take up a book that I do not find something reminding me of the duty of a Christian in regard to vain amusements. Last evening the chapter in course for my reading at the hour of retirement, was the fifth of James. I was struck with the thought that the apostle, in answer to the inquiry, "Is any merry?" does not merely say, Let him sing, but, "Let him sing psalms." Rich men are condemned for having "lived in pleasure on the earth," and for having "been wanton." How clearly the word of God directs us in the way to the new Jerusalem above. If diligently studied, how plain is the path of duty to the believer.

The indisposition of the devotees of pleasure to engage in works of benevolence, is a trait plainly to be seen by every one. It is true indeed, that when a plan of doing good is connected with an amusement, or with some method of spending time in accordance with the in-

clinations, as for instance, if there is to be a fair, there is a readiness to engage in the work; but "visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction," is not an employment in which we shall be likely to find pleasure-seekers engaged. Such persons are by no means ready to deny themselves in their dress and equipage, that they may have the privilege of sending the gospel to the ignorant and degraded; for self is the object that engages their attention. We should be surprised to meet an eminent Christian at a place of vain amusement, and we should be equally surprised to meet one of the devotees of pleasure in a missionary meeting, or to find her in a wretched hovel administering to the wants of its degraded inmates. With a person of this class, money is always at hand to furnish luxurious entertainments, adorn the person, or gratify the taste for pleasure, but for benevolent purposes there is too commonly nothing to spare.

A plea is often made for the introduction of dancing into parties of pleasure, that it prevents trifling conversation and silly plays. There is undoubtedly some truth in this, but the question is, whether dancing is the best remedy for these acknowledged evils. In the

practice of this amusement there may not be much opportunity for conversation, but I would inquire if foolish thoughts do not thus find their way into the mind, giving character to the intercourse for days succeeding. If therefore there is in this way an infusion of vain imaginations, which I think no one will deny, trifling conversation is not prevented, for from the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and an influence from these scenes of frivolity will be diffused abroad by no means beneficial to the community.

In regard to the plays which dancing is thought to prevent, all I can say is, that between these two methods of killing time there is only a choice of evils. The true remedy is, so to cultivate the mind that it shall be filled with useful ideas; for when persons who have no thoughts but trivial ones are together, to pass away the time they must either talk nonsense, play silly plays, or dance; none of them good, though some childish plays are less injurious than foolish conversation or dancing. Among plays there is a choice, as some are much more innocent than others. A dance is often proposed because the company are dull; a high compliment truly, as if one should say,

“Since we are minus brains, let us use our heels.” With a proper cultivation of mind, there certainly would be ideas and an ability to express them, and then these contrivances for passing away the time would be unnecessary. In addition to conversation, music furnishes a delightful source of social enjoyment; and as so much attention is now paid to this branch, it is usually easy in any company to find those who can make the performance interesting.

How any one of a high moral and intellectual character, such a person, for instance, as Mary Lyon, could endure a night at a ball or a fashionable party, I cannot well conceive; I am sure it would require submission like that of a martyr. You, dear Maria, would, I think, find little enjoyment, for which I greatly rejoice.

Your friend,

M. S.

LETTER XV.

MY DEAR MISS STANLEY:

Your letter, how much I did enjoy it. In reading your description of Niagara, I could almost fancy myself on the spot, and the whole scene passing before my eyes. The ladies of our circle all unite with me in thanking you for introducing us to this wonderful exhibition of beauty and sublimity.

And now I must tell you that your letter contained just what I wished you would say. It really seems as if you could almost read my thoughts. The very idea that dancing prevents foolish conversation and silly plays, was brought up in our reading circle last week by Miss Wilcox, who, though she came in as a visitor, yet took an active part in our discussions. She said that, in parties where there is dancing, the time is spent more sensibly than where it is given up to silly plays and talking nonsense. I have just called upon her, and read this part of your letter. She appeared interested in your views, and not disposed to dispute them. I think she has been conscientious in

her approval of this amusement, though she said she knew that in this, as in other things, there are some results not very good. She seemed sensible that no one could be in the habit of attending fashionable parties without acquiring a love of dress. Her parents, she said, were not wealthy, and had really gone beyond their means in supplying her with such articles as would enable her to appear respectably in society, and yet she had often been mortified because her dress was so inferior to that of others. She had once expressed a desire to give a party herself, but her father had said that, though he would love to gratify her, yet he could not meet the expense, as it would cost one-fourth of all he could earn in a year. She conversed very sensibly on the folly of taking so much pains to find pleasure, and though very fond of fashionable amusements, she seemed determined to deny herself these foolish indulgences, and attend more to the cultivation of her mind. She expressed herself much interested in our reading circle, and I think will soon become a member.

How much good might be done with the money which is wasted in trying to please one's self. I cannot begin to think how much a fash-

ionable belle expends in a year for dress and ornaments. "Nothing to wear," gave me more idea of it than I ever had before. If the money spent in extravagant entertainments, dress, and amusements, were devoted to sending missionaries to the heathen, what a change in our world it would make.

I was pleased with what you said of Pilgrim's Progress. It is a favorite book with me. I have read portions of it often, ever since I can remember, but I never saw a "Third Part." Your remarks respecting "flee youthful lusts," gave me some new ideas. It is very plain, I think, if we obey this direction of the apostle, we shall not go to places of vain amusement, nor put ourselves in the way of receiving wrong thoughts. This reminds me that I have intended to ask your advice about attending the opera, theatre, and other fashionable places of resort. I have never been to them, but I should like to know the reasons why an attendance would be wrong.

You have set me to thinking, and I feel more and more that if I am a true Christian, I cannot find pleasure in any thing that is not pleasing to God, that unfits me for his service. I realize more and more, that I need to watch

and pray continually, I am so easily drawn aside, and so prone to yield to temptation.

You speak of music as a source of enjoyment in social circles. It is very delightful, and the influence is generally good, but sometimes we seem compelled to hear songs that are low and foolish, the excuse for singing them being that the tune is pretty.

I have often thought it strange that pious persons who are skilful performers on the piano, take so little interest in sacred music. Do you not recollect that at G—— some of the best musicians seldom joined in this part of family worship? The reason they gave was, that they did not know many psalm-tunes, and I thought they did not care to know them. In our church the singing is very poor, and it is remarked even of some who are professors of religion, that while they are the loudest at a party they are silent in the house of God. So you see there are some things still that trouble me, or that I cannot understand. I know we are all poor imperfect beings, and constantly liable to go astray, but it seems to me if the heart is right, that is, if we love holiness, we shall not choose what leads us further from God.

Pray much for your **MARIA.**

LETTER XVI.

MY DEAR MARIA:

I am always happy to receive your letters. I rejoice to be assured that you are increasingly desirous to find the right way. It is true that your inquiries demand some time for their investigation; but as far as my other duties will permit, they shall receive attention, and I will reply according to the best of my ability.

I am not surprised at your perplexity in regard to music. Christians do not, I am sure, make it the handmaid of religion as much as they might. I have often thought, how can those who, on earth, seem to have so little interest in this part of divine worship, unite for ever and ever in the melody of heaven. It seems indeed an inconsistency to profess to be animated by the same spirit as the sweet psalmist of Israel, and yet to be silent when his psalms are sung. It is true, there are those who have music in their hearts, who cannot join audibly with the great congregation in praising God. I refer not to these, but to those who have the ability, as is evident on other occasions.

Music is a delightful source of enjoyment; and concerts, when the performances are of a chaste and elevating character, furnish a source of pleasure more unexceptionable than almost any other. The taste is thus refined, the soul refreshed, and fitted to grapple with the stern realities of life. We cannot, however, be too careful not to listen to strains by which foolish and impure thoughts are impressed upon the soul; for nothing is more difficult than to erase impressions thus made.

In regard to the opera, of which you wish me to write, I will now say something. The opera and the theatre are closely connected, both being exhibitions of the dramatic art, the dramas in the opera being sung, while in the theatre they are spoken. The dramas are of two kinds, *opera seria* and *opera buffa*, or the serious and the comic. Still, there are monologues as well as dialogues, and often lyrical performances, or addresses to the feelings. The singing in our country is generally in Italian. The music is of great artistic skill, so that to lovers of this art the opera presents great charms. I have, however, never supposed that it is regarded with any more approbation by the religious part of the community than the theatre.

The opera had its origin in Italy, in the latter part of the sixteenth century. Then it was entirely a musical performance. It has now somewhat of the pantomime character; but the dancing was introduced by the French. The design of the ballet-dance is, to "represent by mimic movements and dances, actions, characters, sentiments, passions, and feelings." I presume, while this is the design, yet to the spectators these exhibitions seem merely intended to show the great skill of the performers, and thus excite admiration. The whirling and spinning of the ballet-girls, then pinning themselves to the floor by the big toe, shows that an amazing degree of application must have been exercised in acquiring the art, which might have been exerted for a better purpose. This performance is of an indelicate character; for while standing on the toe, the other foot is stretched out so as to be as nearly parallel to the floor as possible. The dress too of these dancing-girls, gives great exposure to the person; and a wit once suggested that, to render a dull opera interesting, it was only necessary to lengthen the dances and shorten the petticoats. Those, therefore, who gaze at these performances, cannot be persons

of much delicacy. This ballet-dancing however, in our country, is, I am told, practised at the theatre, and not at the opera.

Since I began to look at this subject particularly, I have seen it stated that in Philadelphia the opera, during the past winter, has not been sustained, the attendance being so small. It was also suggested, and that too by a lover of the amusement, that one cause of this diminution of the audience was, probably, the immoral character of the performances. When we take into view the large attendance upon the daily prayer-meeting in that city, and the blessed work of grace there enjoyed, it is certainly no cause of surprise that the interest in this amusement should be lessened. Those who relish the one, can have little delight in the other. A person with a heavenly mind, and a spirit of consecration to the service of the Redeemer, would not, I am sure, be an attendant upon the opera. That professors of religion are sometimes found there, I know ; but I also know, that by this attendance they do not honor Christ, nor do they benefit their own souls. They must be influenced by a desire for selfish gratification, rather than a desire to please God ; for no one who acts from Christian principle

will put himself in the way of sin, and do that voluntarily which will bring reproach upon his divine Redeemer. Carlyle's views give one a vivid idea of its character, and some of his reflections I will quote :

“When I think that music too is condemned to be mad, and to burn herself upon such a funeral-pile, your celestial opera-house grows dark and infernal to me. Behind its glitter stalks the shadow of eternal death. Through it too I look not up into the divine eye, as Richter has it, but down into the bottomless eye-socket ; not upward towards God, heaven, and the home of truth, but too truly, downward, towards falsity, vanity, and the dwelling-place of everlasting despair.” The opera, I am sure, must be considered, like the theatre, one of those amusements in which a Christian should never indulge.

At the present day, in our large cities, many snares are laid by which unsuspecting persons are drawn into scenes which they would by no means voluntarily witness. One of these is, the old device of calling things by wrong names. For instance, a concert is announced, and the stranger having a taste for fine music is there ; but he is disappointed. There is mu-

sic, indeed, but it is intermingled with scenes of a character very unlike what was announced.

The museum, designed to display the wonders of nature and of art, as such, might be visited with advantage; but in this fashionable resort of our great emporium, so many performances revolting to the feelings of serious people are introduced, that a Christian hardly feels it consistent, or has any desire, especially in the evening, ever to be present.

Theatrical entertainments designed to secure the patronage of the better portion of the community are not uncommon, the performances of a character not very exceptionable, thus alluring persons of good morals to an attendance, and tempting them to form habits of dissipation. But I believe it is not too much to say of the theatre, that it is the masterpiece of Satan's inventions. Under the pretence of reforming the world, the arch-deceiver has devised the most cunning contrivance to lead one to laugh at sin, and to become so familiar with scenes of vice, as to think little of violating the laws of the supreme Ruler of the universe. In exhibiting the various phases of human character, sentiments noble and ele-

vated are now expressed, and actions commanding respect and admiration delineated ; and then scenes of pollution and crime are so vividly portrayed, that a moral plague is infused into the soul. Music, poetry, and painting combine their influence, and the fascination is so complete, that spectators seem powerless to escape the snare.

The danger of tampering with this instrument of moral death was illustrated not long since. A clergyman who had sought to impress the mind of his son with the evil of this species of amusement, thought to lead him to feel it more deeply by taking him once to the theatre. The result was, that the youth, captivated by the scenes that evening exhibited, resisting his father's entreaties, gave himself up to an indulgence in this bewildering pleasure, and at last sunk to ruin. Go not then once, dear Maria, to the theatre ; repress the curiosity that might tempt you to do it, and ever exert your influence against this soul-destroying amusement.

In arriving at conclusions respecting any course of action, the judgment of those whose knowledge has been gained by experience is always of much weight. In regard to the the-

atre, I can give you the decision of one deserving our confidence. Dr. Cone, a minister of Christ distinguished for his talents and piety, when a young man struggling to obtain an education, and at the same time to sustain a dependent mother and sister, was induced by the pecuniary emolument, for some years to be an actor on the stage. As the result of his experience, he declares that "this profession, more than any other, is calculated to stifle reflection and banish thought."

Goethe says, "The drama presupposes the existence of an idle multitude." What a character is thus given of those who find their pleasure in frequenting theatrical exhibitions. Again he says, "This art employs the rest, but spoils them. Without any conscience, the player will lay hold of whatever either art or life presents to him, and use it for his fugitive objects, and indeed with no small profit; but the painter who would wish in return to extract advantage from the theatre, will constantly find himself a loser by it, and so also in the like case will the musician." He compares the arts to a family of sisters, of whom "the greater part were inclined to good economy; but one was light-headed, and desirous

to appropriate and squander the whole goods and chattels of the household. The theatre, this wasteful sister, has an ambiguous origin, which in no case, as art or trade or amusement, it can wholly conceal."

Plato says, "Plays raise the passions and pervert the use of them, and of consequence are dangerous to morality;" while Aristotle insists that "the seeing of plays and comedies should be forbidden to young people, until age and discipline have made them proof against debauchery."

Turning to the Romans, we find Tacitus and Ovid having the same estimation of this amusement: Tacitus accounting for the virtue of the German women by their having no play-houses to attend, and Ovid advising the emperor Augustus "to suppress theatrical amusements as a grand source of moral corruption."

Even the infidel Rosseau asks, "Where would be the prudent mother, who would dare to carry her daughter to this dangerous school?" while Archbishop Tillotson calls the play-house "the devil's chapel, a nursury of licentiousness and vice."

Dr. Johnson speaks of "irreligion and licentiousness" being thus "taught openly at the

public charge ;" and President Dwight affirms that "from the stage men are directly prepared to go to the brothel."

Thus you perceive, dear Maria, how heathens and Christians unite in condemning this method of seeking pleasure.

The drama is, as you know, of two kinds, tragedy and comedy, very unlike in character, and yet both having an influence, when vividly portrayed with theatric scenery, altogether undesirable. In tragedy, soul-stirring events and scenes of suffering are brought before the audience with such seeming reality, that the passions are excited to the highest pitch of intensity; then there is naturally an effort to smother the feelings, or to resist the sympathetic emotions, and the result is that, familiar with scenes of pretended grief, the heart becomes hardened and insensible to real woe. Thus the passive habit of pity is weakened by *r  p  tition*, while the active habit of relieving distress is not formed, feelings of benevolence not being brought into exercise. In this way the most unexceptionable plays become decidedly injurious to the character.

In comedy, the scenes brought before the spectator are decidedly the reverse. Sport or

fun is the object, and any thing is the subject that can be thrown into a ridiculous light. It may be the faults and follies of mankind, or virtue and religion—any thing by which a laugh may be produced. No true ideas of excellence are thus obtained, but a false standard of character is presented to the young. Honest labor is so associated with degradation as to appear contemptible; religion, represented under the garb of hypocrisy or cant, is despised, while pride is made to seem noble in its bearing; and the flaunting, gay coquette, successful in her plots, and noted for the many heart-aches she has caused, becomes the admired of all admirers. Thus no true estimate of character is formed, virtues and vices being so confounded, that one is often mistaken for the other.

If any one vice is more glaringly exhibited than any other, it is licentiousness. Scenes suggesting impure thoughts are so often portrayed on the stage, and language offensive to delicacy rendered so familiar, that the soul becomes tainted, and the imagination filled with vicious imagery. Here I must give you a quotation containing the views of one of the wisest and best of men. It is from Dr. With-

erspoon, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and president of Princeton College.

“Where can plays be found that are free from impurity, either directly or by allusion and double meaning? It is amazing to think that women who pretend to decency and reputation, whose brightest ornament ought to be modesty, should continue to abet by their presence so much unchastity as is to be found in the theatre. How few plays are acted which a modest woman can see consistently with decency. No woman of reputation, much less of piety, who has been ten times in a play-house, durst repeat in company all she has heard there. With what consistency they return to the same school of lewdness, they themselves best know.”

As thoughts lead to deeds, it is not surprising that those who frequent this place of amusement should easily yield to temptation, and thus lead a life of infamy and shame. Indeed, the immorality of those who attend the theatre is notorious; people expect to find there robbers and pickpockets, the profane and unclean. Some who are lovers of the dramatic art refrain from an attendance on this

account. They have an aversion to the company in which they would find themselves.

And now, my dear Maria, I think I have said enough to give you and your companions a true idea of these places of amusement, and I am sure you would be very unwilling to find your way to one of these abodes of moral death.

Your friend,

M. STANLEY.

LETTER XVII.

MOST heartily, my dear Miss Stanley, would I thank you for your letter, and in this my companions all unite. If I only do as well as I know, I am sure I shall not stray very far from the right, with such a friend to guide me. The ladies of our circle all came to the conclusion that, if ever so strongly urged, they would not go once to the theatre.

What a striking description is that of Goethe—the dramatic art a good-for-nothing sister that pilfers without paying, and play-actors a very insignificant set of beings.

I am fond of reading dialogues, and sometimes, when listening to a fine drama of Shakespeare, I have felt disposed to ask, why seeing it acted would be any more improper than reading it. The reason now seems clear to me, and there is, I suppose, no probability that the theatre will ever be any better than it is. I had no idea, however, that plays which are acted there are as bad as Dr. Witherspoon says; and I was surprised to find such a universal condemnation of this amusement both

by heathens and Christians, although I never thought that the best class of people went to the theatre, or that a theatre-going young man was as worthy of confidence as one that stood aloof from such scenes of dissipation.

It cannot certainly be safe to put one's self where the mind will be likely to be filled with corrupt thoughts, especially when we take into view what a strong hold any thing has which is received when we are greatly excited. I remember Kames says that theatrical representations, being addressed both to the eye and ear, make a more indelible impression than other exhibitions of the fine arts. I do not suppose that I have any idea how fascinating this amusement is, nor how hard it would be to stay away if one had acquired the habit of attendance. How any one who desires purity of mind, and delights in communion with God, can enjoy being at the theatre, I do not understand.

This makes me think of a question I want to ask you. Hannah More was an eminent Christian, and yet she attended the theatre; and not only did this, but she wrote dramas which were acted upon the stage. How she could delight in this amusement is what appears to

me very strange. Garrick the great actor seems to have been her particular friend.

Another question please answer. In school exhibitions dialogues are acted; and sometimes scenes are represented. Do you think this wrong? What do you think of tableaux and charades? I wish you were here to answer me.

Your

MARIA.

LETTER XVIII.

I OFTEN wish with you, my dear Maria, that we could interchange our thoughts orally instead of writing them ; but as this cannot be, we must make the best use we can of the pen, and be thankful for this privilege.

First I will answer your inquiry about Hannah More, or settle the difficulty that seems to have arisen in your mind in regard to her attendance upon the theatre. In doing this, it will be necessary to refer to some circumstances in her early history. Hannah More was the daughter of a clergyman, and of course belonged to that class to whom education rather than nobility or wealth gave superiority.

She was one of five sisters, all of whom stood high in their intellectual attainments, and were successful as teachers. Early in life little Hannah delighted them by her uncommon genius, but in her subsequent career she outshone them all. While yet a youth she published some works which were favorably received, and noticed by persons of eminence in the literary

world. Soon after this she visited London, and here her reputation had preceded her, giving her an entrance into a circle of as brilliant minds as have at any period ever graced society with their genius, wit, and learning. Here she was not only brought into the company of persons with whom she felt it a privilege and a pleasure to be associated, but she was also introduced to amusements for which she had no taste, and which her moral sense condemned. Dancing and cards were indeed banished from the "Blue Stocking Club," the name given to the social gatherings of those persons so distinguished for their genius and wit, but attendance at the theatre was common. Garrick, one of this circle, was really a prince among actors; and as Miss More had written some dramas which were thought worthy of the stage, it is not strange that she should have accompanied her friends to this place of fashionable resort.

But under the influence of all these circumstances, becoming convinced that the theatre was not the place for a Christian, she decided that she would attend no more. Her decision being made, she acted in accordance with it, and though strongly importuned to resume her

attendance, she could not be prevailed upon to violate her conscience.

Nothing could induce her any longer to encourage what she knew to be evil in its influence, and inconsistent for a Christian to countenance by her presence. During her long life she attended the theatre no more. Consider her youth, the circle in which she moved, the example of older Christians, the distinction she might gain by writing for the stage, and you can form some idea of the strength of principle which influenced her conduct. I know of nothing more to the point in condemnation of the theatre, than the course pursued by Hannah More, a woman eminent not only for her piety, but for strength of intellect, and who has done as much for the elevation of her sex as any one perhaps that could be named, of either ancient or modern times.

You ask concerning the propriety of dialogues in school exhibitions. I suppose there is nothing wrong in speaking a good dialogue, any more than in reading one. The harm is not in the form, but in the matter; and this perhaps is the reason why many imagine the stage might be made the means of promoting good morals. That it does not have this influence we know,

and our knowledge of human nature makes it plain that there is no reason for believing it ever will. But in regard to dialogues in schools, under the direction of judicious teachers, there is no probability that any thing really improper will be permitted. The object is improvement as well as amusement, and of course any thing calculated to exert a bad influence will be carefully excluded. Caution should be exercised to avoid so great a degree of excitement as to draw off the attention from other school duties, and give a taste for theatrical entertainments.

The drama is a very pleasant species of composition, as instead of the scene being described by an observer, the actors themselves relate the story in their own language. It is a very difficult kind of composition to write, as great knowledge of human nature is necessary, to enable one to give the thoughts and feelings of various characters in different conditions of life. A dialogue must be true to nature in the language, as well as in the opinions and sentiments. This method of writing is not wrong, and we find examples of it in Scripture, as the book of Job and the Song of Solomon.

Plato's dialogues have stood the test of

ages, and are still admired. In these dialogues Plato gives his own thoughts and those of Socrates, and probably a true representation of scenes in Athens more than two thousand years ago.

Shakspeare is the most distinguished of all dramatic writers—distinguished both for his genius and knowledge of human nature, as well as for the force and beauty with which he clothes his thoughts.

To repeat what is important and striking, in the manner in which it was first expressed, cannot be wrong; and conversations true to nature may be very useful. Fables, which of course are not literally true, are yet the means of conveying much moral instruction, and our Saviour, we know, taught much by parables.

In regard to tableaux and charades, I see no objection to them. It is certainly a very innocent amusement to act the part of different characters, and little children early begin to do it, by playing keep-house, or come-to-see-you, and in a great variety of other ways. One may sit for a flower-girl, or an old woman; she may act the part of a school-teacher or a pupil, of a mother or a child, of old queen Bess or Pocahontas, without any impropriety. Still,

there is danger, without a nice sense of propriety, of carrying such things too far, and of making them too much of a farce. There are characters that it would not be well to assume in play.

A change of employment is a very good means of restoring our energies, and of giving rest to either body or mind. As by altering the direction in machinery the friction comes not so entirely on the same parts, so by relieving the powers, either mental or bodily, and giving them a respite, they seem to become stronger and more vigorous. Thus the school-girl, after hard study during the day, may find a pleasant relaxation in assisting her mother in domestic duties. Those who cannot have this privilege may cultivate flowers, or walk in the fields, or, with hearts full of benevolence, may visit the poor and relieve their wretchedness. Our sex are highly favored by their employments being of so varied a character. If the weather is unsuitable for exercise in the open air, there are numerous methods of refreshing both body and mind without this exposure, either by play or by work. A pleasant chat while plying the needle is a delightful recreation, and at the same time may be highly

profitable. Then, again, when wearied with the performance of household labor, or with the use of the needle, how pleasant to peruse an interesting book, and thus refresh the worn-out body. Reading, like music, can be a social enjoyment, and either may diffuse a charm through the home circle without interfering with its necessary avocations. Cowper, in his description of a winter evening, beautifully enumerates the social pleasures that may be enjoyed in this quiet season, and shows how delightfully the time may pass without resorting to any of the tricks that idleness has contrived, . .

“To fill the void of an unfurnished brain,
To palliate dulness, and give old time a shove.”

How true indeed, that in all the varied assemblages seeking by some trifling amusement to charm away the livelong night, though there may be much mirth, yet not a countenance is seen to express a joy as refined and sincere as would light up the face in a home-circle like the one the poet thus beautifully describes:

“Now stir the fire and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round ;
Thus let us welcome peaceful evening in ;
And gathering, at short notice, in one group
The family dispersed, thus pass the hours
In social converse and instructive ease ;

Fireside enjoyments, home-born happiness.
 While here the needle plies its busy task,
 The poet's or historian's page, by one
 Made vocal for the amusement of the rest.
 The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet sounds
 The touch from many a trembling chord shakes out
 With the clear voice symphonious, yet distinct.
 Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,
 Nor such as with a frown forbids the play
 Of fancy or prescribes the sound of mirth.
 Added to these are themes of graver tone,
 Exciting oft our gratitude and love ;
 Fruits of omnipotent, eternal love,
 Which we retrace with memory's pointing wand."

At the close of such an evening, in which has
 been enjoyed the feast of reason and the flow
 of soul, peacefully, and at a seasonable hour,
 all retire to rest; not however, we will sup-
 pose, until

"The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
 The big Ha-Bible, ance his father's pride."

A song of praise is poured forth from full
 hearts, and

"Then kneeling down, to heaven's eternal King
 The saint, the father, and the husband prays."

Exercise of the body is highly necessary
 for health as well as for pleasure, and there
 are various methods by which it can be taken
 within doors, when it is imprudent to go out ;
 but the open air is most healthful and invig-
 orating. The ladies of our country are more

sickly than foreigners, owing undoubtedly, in part, to their sedentary habits, or aversion to out-of-door exercise.

We must ever bear in mind that our recreations are to fit us for the better performance of duty, whether it be labor of the body or of the mind, and that we must use them as a means to prepare for the attainment of a higher end. In order to answer the desired purpose, they must be agreeable, or they will not be refreshing; but they must not be of a character so exciting as to use up the strength, and unfit for the business we are under obligation to perform. In order to invigorate the system, there must be no interference with the laws of nature. Night is the time for rest and repose; it is therefore a great injury to both body and mind to take this period for recreation. The custom of commencing evening parties at nine or ten o'clock, and of having the refreshments in the dead of night, is contrary to common-sense, though in accordance with the dictates of fashion. Should we ask which it is our wisdom and duty to obey, we might easily obtain the right answer; and yet how few have the moral courage to act in conformity with what they know to be right, if by so doing

they incur the frown of this potent mistress. The fact that fashion claims night as the time for her amusements is a sufficient reason, if there were no other, why one should not indulge in such pleasures. It is absurd to continue recreations beyond a suitable period; and we can know from our own feelings when they should cease, as easily as we can know when we have eaten what is necessary to satisfy hunger. The body will complain when overtasked or overloaded, and beings endowed with reason can understand these intimations. Whenever an amusement so excites the feelings as to overpower the reason, it is dangerous. As this is true of dancing and theatrical entertainments, you can clearly see that the only safety is in entirely abstaining from them.

With much esteem, yours,

M. STANLEY.

LETTER XIX.

MY DEAR MISS STANLEY:

Your letters are so full of interest that I find myself in eager anticipation of another as soon as I have read the one just received. Then I always want to see you, as I think of so many things I would like to say; or questions are suggested that I am in a hurry to have answered.

I am delighted with your account of Hannah More. I always thought highly of her, but how much is my admiration of her character increased, by the firmness and decision she manifested in adhering to what she believed her duty. I hope I shall be enabled to imitate her example, and ever hold fast to the right, whatever may be the consequences. It is, however, not an easy thing to say no, when strongly urged to engage in what is agreeable to one's taste, even though it is known to be wrong. How much moral courage is required, when one must refuse compliance with the wishes of those whom she loves. Then it is hard to bear ridicule, and to be accused of "thinking yourself better than others—so very

pious as not to be willing to associate with them. I presume Hannah More was thus spoken of; but she seems to have been so intent on doing what she believed to be her duty, as not to be moved by the frowns or flatteries of the world.

I know that decision is a great safeguard, for the firm and unwavering have much less trouble than the undecided and yielding. I have often seen this in school; and I shall never forget Miss Jay. Those who were plotting mischief never tried to draw her into their schemes, for they were sure she would do nothing but what she knew to be right; while her cousin, Fannie Proctor, was often getting into difficulty by listening to her disorderly companions, not daring to show her disapprobation of the pranks they were playing to disturb those who wished to study.

We have all become so much interested in Hannah More, that we intend to read her life. Biography seems to me a very useful kind of reading; for we can thus associate with the very best of people, as for the time we do really have intercourse with them, and their society must have a tendency to improve the character. Then, for the same reason, it cannot be

well to dwell on the lives of those who have been distinguished for evil deeds; for I am sure we cannot associate with such persons without becoming contaminated, as wrong thoughts will thus enter the mind, and it is not easy to put them out, and to become free from their influence. If we "hate vain thoughts," I do not think we can be willing to receive them.

In regard to Shakspeare, whom you mention as the most distinguished dramatic poet, do you approve of reading his plays? A gentleman of my acquaintance told me the other day that he thought the reading of Shakspeare essential to a polite education. Knowing that his dramas are in use on the stage, I could not help feeling doubtful whether you would think as he did; and so, my dear Miss Stanley, as you are my mentor, I come to you for advice.

We were all pleased with what you said in regard to the interference of fashionable amusements with the hours of rest and repose. It seems very foolish to go to a party at the very time we should go to our beds, and to punish ourselves by keeping awake all night, that we may be amused.

Your own

MARIA.

LETTER XX.

MY DEAR MARIA:

Yours is just received. I am glad to find an increase of thought, as well as an increasing diffidence of yourself. The more we become acquainted with ourselves, and the more earnest to find the path of duty, the more we shall feel our need of divine assistance and direction. "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah," is the language of the believer at every step of his pilgrimage through this wilderness to the celestial city; yet while he follows Jesus, and looks to him for strength and guidance, communion with his fellow-travellers is one of his great sources of enjoyment. Graciously has our divine Leader made it the duty of Christians to help one another in the heavenly way, "bearing each other's burdens." But there is a greater nearness and a more tender connection between some Christians than others. Timothy and Titus are addressed by Paul as his own sons in the faith, and you are my dear child in the bonds of the gospel. I pray that "in all things" you may be "an example

to believers," and that thus glory may redound to our divine Immanuel.

I rejoice that you feel so deeply the importance of keeping wrong thoughts out of the mind. If it be so difficult to remove the impression which they make, how carefully should we avoid whatever has a tendency thus to tarnish the soul.

You request my opinion in regard to the reading of Shakspeare, which I will give you with pleasure. Shakspeare is justly considered the prince of dramatic poets; it would seem therefore, that persons of education should be acquainted with his merits, and have a relish for his beauties. Still it should be borne in mind that the design of the author is to exhibit human nature as it is, or men as they have been known to act their part on life's great stage. He therefore introduces you not only to the wise and noble, the heroes of great and soul-stirring scenes, he also causes those to pass before you who are noted for folly, vice, and crime. In some of his dramas we find portrayed the fearful results of yielding to the baser passions; in others, a lifelike exhibition of historic events by which the world has been revolutionized.

A criticism of this great poet that I have lately read is so much in point, that I must give you a little quotation from it.

“Shakspeare strikes upon the tomb of ages; buried monarchs start to life, and followed by their trains, come forth to show us what they were, and tell us how they lived. By his magic key are laid open one after another the most secret recesses of the human heart, and one sees the very springs which have set in motion the machinery of revolutions, the grand passions that have filled the world with action.”

Again, the same author says, “There is much to call into exercise the worst passions of human nature, to tarnish purity of mind, and to beget a kind of profane familiarity with things of high and sacred import.”

You perceive therefore, that while there is such a difference in the moral influence of different works of this great man, much attention should be exercised in making selections for your reading. This is especially important, as scenes and characters are described with such glowing imagery and lifelike proportions, that the impressions made are deep and lasting. The beauties of Shakspeare, however,

are so marked, that there is little difficulty in selecting what to read, and there is much that will repay you for a frequent perusal.

The observation of your friend respecting the reading of this poet, I could not but compare with a direction I once received from a venerated teacher.* He was giving his pupils instruction respecting the books they should read; and after enumerating many authors, with their merits and defects, he mentioned Shakspeare. Some parts, he said, were polluting to the mind, while others were full of beauty and truth. I recollect that he spoke with caution, as if conscious of great responsibility, and fearful of exerting a wrong influence upon his youthful charge; then hesitating a moment, he concluded by saying, "You need never to be ashamed to say you have not read Shakspeare."

You perhaps smile at this, and think my advice is not quite in accordance with that which I have quoted. I am aware of this, but it seems to me that the good man was a little more cautious than was necessary.

Your friend,

M. STANLEY.

* Rev. Joseph Emerson.

LETTER XXI.

MY DEAR MISS STANLEY :

Very much do I thank you for writing me so fully in regard to the reading of Shakspeare. I anticipate much pleasure in perusing his fine thoughts.

I was pleased with the reference to your old teacher Mr. Emerson. I think he was afraid of giving wrong advice, and that if he erred, he intended it should be on the safe side. You have before spoken of him in such a manner as to lead me to feel quite a veneration for him. Misses Grant and Lyon were his pupils, I believe. I am sure he must have been a good man, and eminently useful. Though dead, he still lives in those whom he trained up to teach others, and they again in those whom they have taught. I think I have heard you say that if you have been useful as a teacher, you owe it more to Mr. Emerson than to any one else; and who can form an idea of the good that has been and still is accomplished by the Mount Holyoke Seminary; the institution brought into existence by Miss Lyon's efforts and prayers, and upon which

she impressed her wise and holy influence? What multitudes, there brought into the kingdom of the Redeemer, have gone forth to diffuse light not only in our own country, but in distant heathen lands. It seems as though we might say that the influence of a faithful teacher would never die.

I remember you used to say that teaching is the profession of woman; that the great business of her life is to educate others. I should not think this a very common opinion, though the more attention I have given to it, the more I am convinced of its truth. If young ladies were impressed with this idea, I am sure they would be more sensible of the importance of qualifying themselves for the office. To study his profession is thought necessary for a man; and why is it not equally necessary for a woman?

I think Mr. Emerson first gave you this idea of woman's special business, and the importance of acquiring such an education as would prepare her for the great work of training other minds. He led you to feel that not only the intellect, but the heart must be cultivated, and such a character formed as would fit one to give lessons of practical wisdom, and impress the young with right principles of ac-

tion. I presume, therefore, it was to Mr. Emerson that we owed the "Practical Knowledge Class;" and I am sure your pupils would all unite with me in a vote of thanks for those Wednesday afternoon instructions.

The Memoir of Mr. Emerson I think is published, and I shall take an early opportunity to obtain it. In our reading circle, we are now engaged with the Life of Hannah More. There are two memoirs of her you know, the one by Roberts; and the other by Mrs. Knight. We have both, and find them very interesting. We have read Cowper's Task, as the quotation you gave about winter evening led us to that. We intend reading his other poems, as we are delighted with his beautiful simplicity and fine thoughts; and wishing to become acquainted with the author, we shall endeavor to obtain his Life. Indeed, we have many books in prospect, and we do enjoy these reading afternoons very much. I do not know of a more delightful recreation; and improvement goes hand in hand with pleasure. We are not only adding largely to our stock of ideas, but we are making acquaintance with persons of distinguished excellence, whose society is very agreeable.

At the same time, having so many thoughts to communicate to each other, we are improving our conversational powers; and I should not be surprised if another important result should follow before many weeks; for as we obtain ideas that we wish to preserve, it will be necessary to write them down, and thus I think some will find themselves writing articles before they know it. I have not yet said anything about a paper, lest some of our number should be frightened away from the meetings. There are now thirteen in our circle. All are delighted because you permit them to share your letters. They try hard to prevail upon me to have mine read, but I tell them I must be excused until other members of the circle write something for the benefit of our little community. We take turns in reading, and all have our sewing.

We have found a very poor family in the lower part of the village, and are making clothes for the children, so that they can go to Sabbath-school. Each one contributed something to buy the materials; some used their skill in cutting out the garments, and all take part in plying the needle.

We meet now at each other's houses, and

are usually together from three o'clock P. M. until a little after eight. One of our rules is, to close so as to be at home by nine; and another, that there must be no conversation not connected with the work, or with the reading. Since we began to meet at each other's houses, we have found another rule necessary, as we always stay to tea; and this is, that there shall be no change from the ordinary method of preparing the meal.

Another topic was brought up at our last meeting, upon which we wish your ideas. You will not need to cease writing very soon for want of a subject to employ your pen. In conversing about the reading of Shakspeare, some one remarked, that if it is right to read his plays, it must be right to read novels. Upon this there was quite a discussion in regard to novel-reading, some being in favor of the practice, and others opposed. At length Miss Brace suggested that we should solicit your views. Our request is, that you will give us the reasons for and against this kind of reading. So now, dear Miss Stanley, you are quite drawn into business, and will write for the benefit of many, as well as to instruct and gratify your

MARIA.

LETTER XXII.

MY DEAR MARIA:

The account of your reading circle quite delights me. It is a fine illustration of the pleasure young people may enjoy, without resorting to amusements either decidedly injurious or without any beneficial tendency. Why it is that, in a community distinguished for cultivation of mind, this kind of recreation is not more common, seems hard to understand. Some change, either in the home or school education, must be necessary, that pleasures of an elevated character should be relished. I am convinced, in judging from results, that there is an error in the training of our sex; for while great advantages are open to them, it is still true that but few comparatively are really intellectual. Why it is so, and what remedy can be devised to produce a change for the better, are questions of great practical importance, in which we are all concerned.

Undoubtedly one cause of woman's superficial education is, that in our institutions for young ladies, more labor is laid out for a specified time than can be well performed. Why

this is the case is a question of some interest. Whether it is owing to their superior quickness in acquiring knowledge, or to an indifference in regard to their obtaining a thorough education, I cannot say. This, however, I know to be true, that so long as our sex leave school while yet in their teens, their education will in some respects be superficial; for it is not to be supposed that, with an ordinary degree of precocity, they can at so early an age pursue the higher branches with the profit that might be gained with a mind of more maturity. The manner in which some girls go through Butler's Analogy is an evidence of this: jumbling together the trains of thought, having no conception of the arguments, and distorting the great truths there unfolded. There seems, indeed, an absurdity in expecting a girl of sixteen to pursue the close reasoning and grasp the thoughts of master-minds, and in a few months to become acquainted with what has cost years of profound thinking. If diplomas were not awarded, except to those who had attained at least the age of twenty, it would do something towards removing one of the obstacles in the way of woman's obtaining a thorough education.

Many young ladies, however, in their haste to leave school, abjure the course of study, attending only to what is most fashionable, and laying a book aside when they have obtained a mere smattering of its contents. If they can drum a few tunes on the piano, repeat a few French phrases, and perhaps know enough of algebra to talk about x and y , they are accomplished.

This haste to relinquish advantages that might be longer enjoyed, I can only account for by supposing these fair young creatures so captivated by the brilliant scenes opening before them when released from the thralldom of the seminary, that they have no relish for its quiet pleasures and employments. To a mind occupied by the frivolities of fashionable life, dress, and vain amusements, the pursuit of science can hardly be congenial, and study must be irksome; it is not therefore strange if little improvement is made, and that those permitted to pursue their own way, should leave school at a very early age and enter upon these fascinating pleasures. That many, long before the judgment is mature, are thus left to their own choice, is well known to teachers, as these important questions, where to attend school,

how long to continue there, and what studies to pursue, are often by the father and mother left to the decision of the child. Should the teacher presume to interfere with the wishes of the pupil, another school is sought; and the little ruler goes where she imagines her directions will receive more attention. This want of coöperation on the part of the parent, and these habits of insubordination and self-gratification, early formed and constantly indulged, present an insuperable obstacle to the efforts of instructors to render pupils thorough in the knowledge they profess to acquire. "It is the children's world," is a reflection forced upon them, the parents having ceased to govern.

Old discipline, indeed, "overlooked and unemployed," seems to have "sickened and died;" and the results, plainly visible, are thus graphically described:

"Then study languished, emulation slept,
And virtue fled. The schools became a scene
Of solemn farce, where Ignorance in stilts,
His cap well lined with logic not his own,
With parrot-tongue performed the scholar's part,
Proceeding soon a graduated dunce."

It would indeed be surprising if these inexperienced guides should direct wisely at an age when the feelings are most excitable, the

passions strong, and the judgment weak ; or if, while temptations meet them at every turn captivating to the senses, and making large promises of pleasure, they should have energy of mind sufficient to resist these allurements. How great the obligation of parents and teachers, by kindness and sound discretion, to guide these inexperienced ones in the pathway of wisdom !

You no doubt recollect a class of young ladies in our seminary, superficial in their acquirements, with no interest in any thing intellectual, often discontented and grumbling because of their want of liberty ; while the theme upon which they delighted to dwell was, what a good time they would have when they "got out of the old prison," and could go to parties and have as much company as they pleased. • Intent upon such thoughts and upon being freed from study, nothing could be thoroughly learned : nor is it singular that, with anticipations like these, they should have left school young ; and when at liberty to pursue their own course, should have given themselves up to amusements of the most frivolous character.

The remedy to be devised for correcting these evils is apparent ; but what hope there is

of a change for the better I am unable to say, for it is hard to correct errors in those whose character is formed. Parents must enter into the work with all the heart, and parents and teachers must be united in performing their duty. But when I see these responsible stations occupied by those who have little sense of their obligations, and others pressing into the ranks insensible of the duties that will soon devolve upon them, and making little effort to become fitted for their performance, I perceive little hope of a change for the better. Yet still I hope, and earnest shall be my efforts to arouse my countrywomen to a sense of the much they have received, and of the much that of them is therefore required. Earnestly would I plead with those who have entered the ranks of the great Captain of our salvation, to put on "the whole armor of God," and take a stand "against the wiles of the devil," not parleying with the enemy nor assuming his garb, thus helping on his machinations. Having sworn allegiance to their divine Leader, it surely becomes them to obey his injunctions, and to train the immortal beings committed to their charge to follow the same heavenly standard.

I rejoice that my dear Maria and her associates have escaped the whirl of fashionable amusements, and find pleasure in employments of an elevated character. What particularly pleases me in your reading circle, is the kind of books that occupy your attention—not frivolous stories, but such as will improve your minds, and give right views of your duty to God and to your fellow-beings.

I am here reminded of the request of the ladies of your reading circle, that I would give them my thoughts on novel-reading; and you will please assure them that if I can aid them in their search for the right way, it will ever be to me a source of unfeigned pleasure.

In writing upon this subject, the first step is to ascertain what a novel is. Of course it is fiction, but it is not proper to give this name to all fiction. Webster's definition is, "A fiction designed to illustrate the passions, particularly that of love." We here obtain a pretty good idea of this species of composition, for such works are evidently not intended to impress lessons of practical instruction, nor to lead one to feel the obligation to govern the passions; but by exhibiting their power, to

produce a story as exciting as possible, and thus minister to the appetite for pleasure.

In a sermon which I recently heard, novels were denominated "sensation literature," and were described as "presenting false views of human life, so as to create a morbid desire for what is erratic, eccentric, rabid, unnatural; got up merely to awaken unholy desires, to feed the loose imagination and the prurient appetites of the young and inexperienced." This sensation literature, meeting one at every turn, in newspapers, magazines, cheap pamphlets, as well as in beautiful volumes, and being as irresistible in its influence as the fascination of a serpent, there cannot be too much earnestness in warning you of the danger of giving yourselves up to its indulgence.

My good minister Dr. Murdock remarked, that "young women are more exposed to this noxious evil than young men, as miasma when confined to a secluded spot is more fatal than when the sun, the winds, the snow, the frost, and the rains reach it." The fact that our sex very early in life become absorbed in this kind of reading is, doubtless, one cause of their superficial education; the taste being thus perverted, and the mind rendered unwilling to

make intellectual effort. The sciences are studied at school because they must be ; but on leaving the seminary their books are thrown aside, being done with for ever. Even history and biography, as well as all works which exercise the reasoning powers, share the same fate. The education of such is of course superficial.

This species of fiction is of two kinds, novels and romances. In the romance, scenes are described that are wild and extravagant, and altogether fabulous ; while in the novel the description is of apparently real events, but so highly colored that the mind is impressed with false views of human life. It would therefore seem that novels are most likely to be injurious, but romances fill the mind with foolish and ridiculous scenes and images. In either case the reader is introduced into an ideal world, both characters and events being overdrawn. Let a person become devoted to works of this description, she loses her interest in the everyday scenes of life, and yielding herself to this fascinating influence, neglects the most important duties, and abridges the hours of necessary repose. This amusement, like all others of this exciting character, should therefore be avoid-

ed. The reading of novels unfits for this life, and that which is to come. All this might be said, even if the book could not be considered decidedly immoral; but how much more fearful the influence, when it makes one familiar with impurity, vice, and crime.

All works of fiction, however, are not to be condemned, for we should thus cast aside the most brilliant exhibitions of genius, together with the lessons of human wisdom which for ages have instructed mankind.

There are books sometimes called novels which are not properly classed with this sensation literature, as they are moral tales designed to exhibit human life in its true character, and to impress the mind with lessons of practical wisdom. As an illustration of works of this description, we may mention *Cœlebs* by Hannah More, and the *Vicar of Wakefield* by Goldsmith.

It is also equally true, that there are many books professing to be moral tales designed for the instruction of the young, which have a greater tendency to excite the feelings than to improve the heart, and it is not always easy to decide to which class the work belongs.

Instruction by illustration has been found

in all ages more powerful than precept, and our Saviour taught much by parables. In pursuing this method, the great object is to make the truth so apparent that there is a self-application; thus the fables of Æsop impress the mind more forcibly than close reasoning. Allegories are but an extended fable, and the beauty and force of this kind of writing is felt by every one in reading the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

In the same manner, by the relation of events not known to have occurred in the order in which they are related, or of deeds not perhaps performed by the persons to whom they are ascribed, the benefit or the evil of any course of action may be illustrated, and moral lessons impressed upon the heart. Many works of this description, both in the old and the new world, have been published during the last forty years. But while much that is of great value has been added to the stock of reading, still it must be admitted that a torrent of trashy matter has issued from the press. Works of fiction, some of them truthful and instructive, others exciting and altogether of the character of novels, have been multiplied beyond measure. The abundance of this kind of literature, with the facilities for its circulation, has had an amaz-

ing influence upon all classes, but particularly upon youth. One evil, among others, resulting from this species of reading, is the habit of so generally gaining instruction from stories as to produce an aversion to receiving it in any way that is not entertaining, and consequently a distaste for what is useful and solid, as history, biography, and works of an elevated character both in prose and poetry. With many it would seem that there is no interest in books except as they furnish amusement.

I have been delighted with the selection of reading which the ladies of your circle have made, as it shows that you have a higher object than mere selfish gratification, and that you are capable of relishing what, both in its moral and intellectual character, is truly worthy your attention.

In looking over what I have written, I think you may perhaps be disposed to say that I have not, as you wished, given the reasons for and against reading novels. I acknowledge that I have rather sought to show you that it requires thought and discrimination to make a selection of the rich treasures that in the world of mind are spread out before you. You cannot always tell what a book is by the appella-

tion that is given it, and while the advice of judicious friends is a great advantage, still it is important to acquire an ability to judge for one's self. It is not, however, necessary to go through a book in order to ascertain whether it is worth reading, any more than to drink a whole cask of wine to discover its quality; a single sip is sufficient. So of a book, a glancing over the table of contents, or of a few pages, will give its character. Do you find religion or the Scriptures treated with lightness or contempt, or do its pages contain low, vulgar, or profane language, or is there an effort to undermine the principles of eternal truth, beware of its influence. Novels and romances, or works giving unreal views of human life, designed to excite the passions without conveying any good moral influence, often putting virtuous deeds and characters into a ridiculous light, while those who are vicious and guilty of crime are so exhibited as to be looked upon with admiration, these of course are to be entirely discarded. The more brilliant the genius of the author, and the more vividly the scenes and characters are delineated, the greater the danger in perusing them.

It is impossible to explore all the treasures

that have been brought to light by the efforts of human genius. The world is full of books that will repay your research, and as you cannot read them all, you need to exercise much judgment in the selection of those that shall receive your attention. It is surely absurd to remain unacquainted with the most gifted authors, while you throw away time with those that are unworthy your perusal.

Works of imagination are agreeable, and when weary one may find a pleasant relaxation in reading fiction, either in prose or poetry, that is lively or facetious, as, for instance, a story like John Gilpin, or the Spectator.

I believe I had better bring my letter to a close, though I seem not to know where to stop.

Yours truly,

M. STANLEY.

LETTER XXIII.

MY DEAR TEACHER :

Yours was received just in time for our reading circle yesterday. I had hardly opportunity to look it over before meeting the ladies. Every one seemed on the tiptoe of expectation, eager to learn your views on a subject upon which we had all become intensely interested. Last Thursday we had quite a discussion upon the important theme, and found ourselves greatly nonplussed in regard to what might be called novels. In our perplexity we had recourse to the dictionary, but this, while it gave some light on the subject, left us still very much in the dark. What, for instance, could we call Miss Edgeworth's tales, or Mrs. Sherwood's, or Charlotte Elizabeth's; some of them more religious than others, but yet nothing but stories? Then "Wide, Wide World," "Flower of the Family," "City and Country Life," and a host of other books were brought up, that we did not know whether to call novels or not. Your distinction between a novel and moral tale was just what we needed, and we

thought we could see it very plainly, though I think it must require a nice discrimination to determine to which class some books belong.

That what you so plainly described as "sensation literature" should be altogether discarded, seemed plain to us all; and the character given of it was so graphic, that it would seem easy to decide what books belong to this class, yet I think it sometimes would be difficult. One must be very free from prejudice, and give close attention, in order to come to a right decision. The advice of judicious friends seems very desirable for a young person in ascertaining the character of a book that she is disposed to read; but I have been amused at the different opinions given by wise people about the same work: some looking at it, I suppose, in one light, and some in another, as it is with dancing.

In our circle some of the ladies expressed much regret that they had wasted so much time in light reading; others, that they had been in the habit of going through a book just to get the story, skipping over the moral lessons. In some of the moral tales this is quite easy, as in the "Lady of the Manor." Miss Macy said she never had a thought but that

she might read whatever came in her way, if she took a fancy to it; but she wondered how she could have lived so long, without finding out what now seemed so plain.

I read from Mrs. Ricord's Mental Philosophy, the account that she gives of the lady who had such a passion for novels, that she sat up nights to read, thus bringing on severe nervous headaches, so that she was unable to attend to her family. At length, his home being so uncomfortable, her husband spent his leisure hours at a tavern, became a drunkard, and sunk to ruin; while she and her children found a refuge in an almshouse. It seems as though such an instance as this might lead one to take warning not to yield to this foolish indulgence; but no one intends to go quite so far, and each one thinks she can stop when she pleases.

I really believe that one great cause of a superficial education among young ladies is the reading of stories. Many in your seminary were in the habit of spending much time in this manner. I have often seen magazines and newspapers so hidden, that the teacher would suppose the girls were studying, when they were absorbed with a story. I have noticed such ones in the class, to see how little they

knew of the lesson ; they either being entirely silent, or else chiming in when some one else was speaking. I should think the mental powers would be weakened by going over that which requires no effort of mind, and the moral sense is surely benumbed by a constant repetition of that which is known to be wrong.

Another question, Miss Stanley, I want to ask you: What do you think of Sabbath-school books? In our discussions about novel-reading, there has been much said of them. Some of our ladies insist that there are novels in these libraries. They say that it is from these books that they have acquired a taste for such reading, and that your definition of a novel is an exact description of them.

Please give us your thoughts in your next letter.

Your

MARIA.

LETTER XXIV.

MY DEAR MARIA :

I rejoice that your circle are so much interested in my letters, and feel that they receive from them profit as well as pleasure. Nothing renders me more happy than to be the means of improvement to the youth of my country. I trust that you and your companions will all be active in this great work, each diffusing in the sphere in which she moves an elevating and purifying influence. For what should we wish to live, but to be blessings in the world in which for a little time we are permitted to have a home? May we all be followers of Him who when on earth went about doing good.

You ask my opinion respecting Sabbath-school books. This I am willing to give, though I may differ from others whom I love and esteem. In reply, I must say that from the first of my having any knowledge of these libraries, I have always found some books that seemed to me unsuitable for Sabbath reading; and as all children, as well as others, understand that these books are designed to be read on this

day, I infer, that putting them into the hands of the young, has an influence contrary to the teachings of the word of God.

I am aware that this remark may subject me to the charge of being puritanical, and that by some very worthy persons; but it is a charge that I consider most honorable, for with our Puritan fathers I do hold to the obligation to keep holy the Sabbath, and I condemn every thing that has a tendency to lessen the reverence for this holy day. How it can be keeping the Sabbath holy to engage in any reading which is not decidedly religious, I cannot understand; nor how it can be teaching children obedience to the divine command, to put into their hands such books as are merely amusing, proper to be read on week-days, but having no influence to bring them to a knowledge of God. Is it not tempting them to violate this sacred day?

I must also say that I have been pained to see, in these sacred depositories, books which are more distinguished for the fascination of the story than for any good instruction, and which have a great resemblance to that class which are called novels. I am not therefore surprised at the remarks of your ladies, but

regret that there is so much reason for their being made. It is, I fear, but too true, that young people, captivated by the perusal of these Sabbath-school books, have strengthened, if they have not acquired, a taste for that kind of reading which we must absolutely condemn.

Another evil which may be considered a result of placing works of this character in these libraries is, a neglect of the Bible. It is hard to leave an exciting story; and besides, it must be finished, so as to be returned and get another; and thus the Bible is not read, and even the Sabbath-school lesson is not well learned, the sacred hours of this holy day being spent amid the exciting scenes of the beautiful fiction, and even the time of divine service devoted to the interesting book. Such reading destroys the relish for the teachings of divine inspiration, and leads to a habit of irreverence in the house of God.

I have long mourned over these evils, and sought to do what I could for their prevention; sometimes removing those books which I knew ought not to be in the library, and putting others in their places; directing my pupils in the choice of reading, and ever striving to impress

them with a sense of their obligation to "remember the Sabbath-day, and keep it holy," and to spend its sacred hours in searching the word of God, and in listening to the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour.

Among the sins of our day, none are more marked than a neglect of the Bible, a violation of the Sabbath, and the profaning of God's name; and in this blessed institution, the Sabbath-school, instead of a temptation to the commission of these sins, the most earnest efforts should be made to stay the tide of evil that is sweeping over our land.

I have given you the dark shades of the picture, but there is a brighter view. A large proportion of the volumes collected in these libraries are well chosen, containing exhibitions of divine truth clearly delineated, both precepts and doctrines illustrated, and applied to the heart and conscience. Children and youth, by perusing these simple teachings, and becoming acquainted with those who have been eminent for their devotion to the service of God, have often been led to embrace the Saviour, and fitted for usefulness in the church and the world. We may therefore reckon Sabbath-school books as one of the means for the

diffusion of divine truth, and the advancement of the kingdom of the Redeemer.

I have written on, giving you a view of the subject in its different lights, according to my own deep convictions. As many of you are teachers in the Sabbath-school, I trust the hints I have thrown out may lead you to feel more deeply your obligations to those committed to your charge. Besides impressing the tender mind with the truths in the lesson for the day, there is duty to be performed in regard to the book that has been read, and in guiding each member of your class in the choice of another; but especially should you lay open the rich treasures of the word of truth, and lead your pupils to search this blessed charter of all our hopes.

I feel deeply anxious that Sabbath-school teachers themselves should carefully study this sacred volume. They cannot be too well acquainted with this treasury of divine knowledge. It is an inexhaustible mine. The more deeply it is explored, the richer the ore. I have often been pained with the inattention of young Christians to the Bible, and their consequent ignorance of its sacred contents. Perhaps this is owing to the great multiplication

of books; though the character of those that are read has, I think, the greater influence in diminishing the interest in these divine oracles.

But what book can compare with the Bible? In literary merit, in beauty of imagery, in sublimity and pathos, no composition of ancient or modern times bears any comparison with the sacred writings. Nor is this surprising; for the authors, moved by the Holy Ghost, speak of the loftiest theme that ever entered the mind of mortals, and into which angels desire to look, the wonderful scheme of redemption; that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Not only have we the prophetic writings, in which this great truth is so distinctly revealed to fallen man, but we have the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour, where this plan of redeeming love is so clearly unfolded, and the terms of acceptance so plainly made known, that even a little child may become wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ. What so likely to move the hard and impenitent heart, as to read of the deeds of love performed by the blessed Saviour while here on

earth, to follow him through the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, and then to behold this same Saviour rising from the dead, and ascending to heaven, assured that he ever liveth to make intercession for us?

How precious the privilege to be permitted to make known this wondrous scheme of redeeming love to children, and ere they have been hardened in sin, to bring them to that Saviour who has said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." With the commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," how can those whose hearts are burning with love to Him who hath loved them, and given himself for them, refrain from dedicating themselves, and all they have and are, to the promotion of his blessed cause?

May we all give ourselves wholly to this work.

With much love,

M. STANLEY.

LETTER XXV.

“How grateful we are to our dear Miss Stanley for her letter,” is the feeling of all the ladies of our circle. The Bible—I trust we shall all read it more than we have done, and that as Sabbath-school teachers we shall be more faithful.

In regard to Sabbath-school books, your ideas are just what I thought they would be. There are those perhaps in every library that ought not to be there, but at the same time each library comprises a great amount of valuable reading. I believe many good persons as well as yourself feel the importance of being more careful in the selection of books.

I have sometimes, especially of late, put away my library book, thinking it hardly suitable for the Sabbath. I wonder, however, that I did not see that it was improper that such books should be in those libraries.

I should think some of our ladies had before had serious thoughts on the subject. Miss Sill said that her father, though not a professor of religion, had often expressed a disapprobation of books brought from the Sabbath-school,

saying that his mother would not have allowed him to read such on the Sabbath. Miss Doty remarked that she had often thought there were many in the library unsuitable for this day; but she had never dared to speak of it, for as these books were published by a religious society, and selected by persons much better than herself, she thought she ought not to consider it wrong to have them there, or to read them on the Sabbath. Miss Noble was very certain that it was from these books she had acquired her taste for novels; and all united in insisting that it was in this way they had formed the habit of reading stories.

I think it important to direct pupils in the selection of books, and to question them about what they have read. I trust that we as teachers shall feel more deeply our obligation to instruct our classes in the right manner.

At the close of the reading circle, several remained, and proposed that we should have a prayer-meeting on Saturday afternoon, to implore the Divine blessing on our Sabbath-school, and especially to plead with our heavenly Father that we as teachers may be faithful, and that through our instrumentality the members of our classes may be brought to the

Saviour. There were six who agreed to meet at our house. I know this will rejoice the heart of my dear teacher, and that she will unite with us in praying for a blessing upon those for whom she feels so deep an interest, and in giving thanks to God for this indication of the influences of the Holy Spirit being poured out upon us.

There is a great change here. It hardly seems like the same place. Morning prayer-meetings have been commenced, and are fully attended. There are many who seem very serious, and others who are rejoicing in the love of Jesus. There is a deep feeling among the members of our circle, and I hope they will all come to the Saviour without delay.

The closing part of your letter affected us much. How glorious the plan of salvation, and what a precious privilege that we may be the instruments of bringing others to an experimental acquaintance with this amazing display of divine grace.

I think we cannot study the Bible too much. I know that having an abundance of good reading is very apt to lead to a neglect of this blessed book. Then it is often read carelessly, or without due reflection. I feel

that this is the case with me. The daily reading too is not in course, but at any place where one happens to open, so that there is no regard to its connection, and some portions are never read at all. Some like the poetical parts, others the historical, while few take any interest in the prophecies; and there is so little thought, that the meaning is not well understood, and but little impression made upon the heart. I think it would be a great blessing to the youth of this country if the Bible were studied in our schools, as it is in the missionary schools among the Nestorians. The converts there seem to have a deeper knowledge of the Scriptures than young Christians in this highly favored land.

I have for some time been intending to ask your advice about the reading of poetry. The members of our circle do not think alike about it. Some would prefer to have nothing else, and others take but little interest in what I should consider a very beautiful poem. As all think you are correct in your views, I presume what you would say would tend to produce a unity of feeling on this subject.

Your affectionate

MARIA.

LETTER XXVI.

MY DEAR MARIA :

Much was I affected by your letter. I do rejoice in the tidings that the Spirit of God is moving upon the hearts of that dear circle of young ladies in B——, whose advancement in a higher life has been a subject of so much interest to me. I rejoice to know that any of them are led to unite in imploring divine assistance in the performance of duty, and in pleading for a blessing upon their efforts to lead others to Christ. I trust soon to be cheered with the intelligence that all have a heart to join in these petitions at the mercy-seat, and in ascriptions of praise to Him who hath brought them out of darkness into marvellous light. I do indeed unite in giving thanks to God that you are sharing in those blessed influences now so abundantly poured out upon thousands in this our highly favored land. The great Hearer of prayer will listen to your petitions, and the blessing will rest not only upon yourselves, but upon your pupils, your associates, and friends. Let your active

efforts and your prayers go together ; speak often one to another on this glorious theme, the Saviour's love ; by your example recommend the religion you profess to those with whom you mingle from day to day ; and do not fear to tell, to those who are ignorant of the way of life, the greatness of this salvation.

Your letter has led me to realize, even more than I had before, that Christians cannot be too careful that every thing they do should be consistent with the principles of the gospel. How many of the habits practised by professors of religion seem to the unconverted quite inconsistent ; as, for instance, worldly conversation and reading on the Sabbath, and the indisposition ever to speak of Him whom they profess to love supremely. The vanity and love of dress sometimes very apparent in Sabbath-school teachers, and their taking the time which should be spent in the instruction of their classes to chat with each other in a low voice, even little children notice ; and of course the influence is very far from being what is desirable to be impressed upon their pliant minds. How much watchfulness is necessary, that the good designed to be accomplished should not be "evil spoken of;" and that those who enter

the fold of Christ should "have a good report of those that are without." The command of our Saviour, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," should ever be the watchword of his followers.

A neglect of God's word has led to a fearful departure from the truth, and given entrance to many errors, both of doctrine and practice, into the church of Christ; and a marked feature, even of this age of Sabbath-schools, is ignorance of the Bible. This assertion I would not make, if I had not found it true by my own experience in teaching children of pious parents as well as others, many of them having become members of the church before being placed under my charge. I have not only found an ignorance of the Bible, but an indifference in studying it; and in no effort have I felt more discouragement than in seeking to produce an interest in this best of all books.

I am pleased with your request for my thoughts on the reading of poetry; for there is much that I would like to say on this subject. Its great influence in the formation of character is one view that we may take; and we may

also consider it, as one of the fine arts, an abundant source of pleasure.

I have already referred to the influence of reading upon the mind ; but of two books, the one that produces the stronger emotions is longer remembered, and therefore has the greater power in moulding the character. That poetry is more easily learned than prose, is what I suppose every one admits, or knows by experience to be true. This is owing in part to its influence in producing emotion ; for the thoughts are thus deeply engraven on the soul, and the impression cannot be easily effaced.

The formation of character is each one's own work. It is indeed begun by parents, particularly by the mother, but it is carried on by the individual himself. The persons with whom one associates, the books that are read, as well as the advantages for education to which one has access, all have an influence in moulding and fashioning the soul ; but man is a voluntary agent, and these are instruments employed by him according to his own pleasure. He may use his talents, and thus increase them ; or, like the slothful servant, he may bury them in the earth. He may train his mind aright, rendering it strong and vigorous, stored

with pure and elevated conceptions ; or he may yield to an idle inaction, an indulgence of evil passions, and suffer it to become the receptacle of what is loathsome and corrupt.

Dear Maria, you thus see how great is our responsibility. Let us look only at the influence, in the formation of character, of the books that we read, and we cannot but have some sense of the consequences resulting from the selection that we make of the thoughts that shall thus enter the mind. A library is open to us, and the choice presented of mingling with the trifling, the vulgar, and profane, or with minds pure, lofty, and refined. We may be conversant with poets, orators, philosophers, and divines ; not only with those who have drunk deep at the fountains of human knowledge, but with those enlightened from above ; we may commune with prophets and apostles, and even with the blessed Immanuel, "God manifest in the flesh." On the other hand, we may choose the society of the vicious and the corrupt, the devotees of mammon or of fashion ; we may waste our time and expend our energies in becoming familiar with scenes of folly and dissipation, or of malignity and crime. To decide therefore what books to read, espe-

cially among those which have the greatest power in moving the soul and moulding the character, is of amazing importance, and demands our most earnest attention.

Let us take two poets of the most marked character, as an illustration of the choice that is before us, and consider the influence to which one is voluntarily subjected by perusing the poems of the one or of the other.

Milton and Byron have ranked among those who stand highest in that country which, in modern times, has given birth to more heroes of song than any other, and both are distinguished for power of intellect and transcendent genius. The one now bears the soul aloft, as he sublimely soars beyond the ken of mortals, and then introduces you into scenes of such surpassing loveliness, that you are enraptured by the view. The other breathes into his descriptions a soul-stirring charm, and clothes his thoughts with beauties so sparkling that the feelings are touched with a thrill of delight. No two authors, however, more opposite in moral character, and in the apparent object for which they wrote, could be selected. The influence of the one is elevating; of the other, often deadening to the moral sensibility. Mil-

ton, impelled by a lofty philanthropy, exerts his almost superhuman intellect to vindicate the ways of God, and to inspire reverence, devotion, and love; while Byron, fired with a foul misanthropy, exercises the greatest genius perhaps ever thus prostituted, to produce a spirit of malevolence and dissatisfaction; thus blighting the buds of virtue, and extinguishing in man the love of his fellow-man. Of the two, Byron is the more fascinating. Indeed, in his writings are found inimitable touches of the beautiful, and gems of sparkling lustre; yet misanthropy, scorn, and revenge so possess his soul as to darken his mental vision, and array before him images most dire and hateful. In becoming acquainted with his early history, we find a cause for this in the maternal influence by which his character was moulded; and we cannot but feel the sincerest pity for this misguided son of genius. Still, while we pity we may not sympathize, nor should we suffer his unholy thoughts to find an entrance into our minds.

That Milton's great work, "Paradise Lost," is not more read by the youth of the present day, is probably owing to its elevated character. The poet soars so high, and brings forth

conceptions so grand, that to be understood and relished, one must have a highly cultivated mind—a mind capable of grasping these lofty ideas, and of discovering their truth and beauty. “There must be some music in the soul that is to appreciate the genius of Milton.” Seek then, dear Maria, to attain that power of thought, and that relish for the truly beautiful and sublime, which will enable you to find delight in the pure fountains of heavenly love, rather than in the poisoned streams of earth-born malevolence.

There are many other English bards, standard authors, their works having stood the test of time, whose poetry, while a source of pleasure, fills the mind with pure and lofty thoughts, and has a refining and an elevating influence upon the character. It is, however, hardly possible to give you much conception of their beauty and excellence in the compass of a letter. A few, whom you will probably regard as my favorites, I will mention. First I will speak of Cowper, who is so surpassingly sweet in painting the scenes and socialities of domestic life, so eminently a Christian poet, opening a pure fount at which you may quaff the richest nectar without fear of poison to the soul,

that I trust you will often here resort to slake your thirst for pleasure. Thomson, as beautiful and picturesque in his description of scenes in nature, as Cowper of fireside enjoyments and the various incidents interwoven in the web of human life, equally pure and elevated in his thoughts, leading through these luxuriant paths to the great Source of all, surely he should be read, and not glanced over with careless inattention. Both of these poets impress the soul with truth, causing the objects and events daily passing before us to speak in words of wisdom, and bidding us fasten our hopes on Him who holds the universe in his hands.

Gladly would I go on and expatiate upon the beautiful simplicity of Goldsmith, and the touching tenderness of Hemans; the lofty conceptions of Young, and the evangelical strains of Montgomery; I would introduce you to Scott and Burns, Pollock and Wordsworth—would tell you of their sparkling thoughts, and the rich gems dripping with beauty that ever and anon will meet your eye; but time would fail me. The character of a poet generally gives character to his poetry. It is true indeed, as in the case of Byron and Moore, wicked men may sometimes give us beautiful gems of sacred

poesy, or, like Burns, may sometimes guard against irreverence in speaking of sacred things, yet we do not feel the safety in reading their works, that we do in reading Montgomery, Cowper, or Thomson, who wrote no line which, "dying, they would wish to blot."

I would not pass unnoticed our own bards, those in whose poetic effusions there is the soul of melody. It is true, no great work like that of Milton graces our literature; still, taste and genius are exhibited in many beautiful creations, as in those of Bryant, Halleck, Sigourney, and Longfellow; but I presume you are more or less conversant with them, and with others who have touched the heart by their mellifluous strains. There is a volume of the "Female Poets" of our country, and also of "British Female Poets," which you will love to read, and in which you will find some precious gems.

A good arrangement would be, frequently to have a poetical selection, or else an afternoon set apart entirely for the reading of poetry. Both your pleasure and your improvement will be increased by bringing before the mind beautiful thoughts expressed in beautiful language.

But while enumerating the writers of poetry that are worthy of your attention, I would not fail to remind you that of all authors, both ancient and modern, none can compare with those divinely appointed to make known to us the oracles of eternal truth. The poetry of the sacred volume, having a theme more exalted than was ever conceived by men or angels, the Holy Ghost inspiring the writers to pour forth from a full soul these glorious revelations, must indeed rise to a loftier height than any mere human composition. Their souls kindled by fire from the altar of God, and attuned to heavenly symphonies, they seem to have dipped the pen in living light, and to give us the language of heaven.

In this Book of books we find all the varieties of poetic composition in the highest perfection; and the writers, while they reach the most exalted heights of grandeur and sublimity, at the same time, in beauty of thought and expression, have no equal.

The sweet Psalmist of Israel now lifts the soul above all sublunary things, and we behold the Almighty, as "He bowed the heavens, and came down; and darkness was under His feet: and He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea,

He did fly upon the wings of the wind ;” and then we look upon this same infinite Being as our “Shepherd,” and by him are led into the “green pastures,” and “beside the still waters.”

The wise man gives us a treasure of “unstrung pearls.” These divine teachings are expressed in striking comparisons and pithy antitheses ; and the more we dwell upon these terse and pointed exhibitions of truth, the more are our minds imbued with heavenly wisdom.

In the book of Job we have a dramatic poem, abounding with lofty imagery and brilliant thoughts, most fully unfolding the varieties of human character, and giving exalted conceptions of the great Author of the universe. Now we mingle in scenes and with characters true to the experience of every-day life, and then we are permitted to have a glimpse of the unseen world, and views of awful sublimity burst upon us.

An attentive study of the prophetic writings exalts our conceptions of God, while it fills the soul with a sense of his infinite love in making known his designs of mercy to a lost and guilty world. In reading of the judgments denounced upon the enemies of God’s chosen

ones, as well as upon his own disobedient people, and of the execution of these judgments as divinely foretold, we are impressed with the infinite knowledge, truth, and justice of Jehovah, and the fearfulness of daring to sin against the supreme Ruler of the universe.

The different writers of this part of the word of God have in their poetic style each a different character. Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, is distinguished for a touching pathos, a melting tenderness; and we see in him a type of the Man of sorrows as he wept over Jerusalem.

Isaiah the evangelical prophet, his lips touched with sacred fire, pours forth strains of surpassing sublimity as he beholds the day when "a Child is born," "the government upon his shoulders," his name, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace." In a burst of holy rapture he exclaims, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God;" then calls upon all to "prepare the way of the Lord," while in prophetic vision he beholds the forerunner of the Messiah, and declares that "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

The visions of Ezekiel, though more obscure, are full of sublimity. In bold figures and elevated language an earnest is given of the latter day glory, and the divine assurance is recorded: "I will bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel."

But, dear Maria, you are probably beginning to think I have become so much absorbed in my favorite theme, that I have forgotten I am writing a letter. And then it was poetry upon which you wished me to write, while as usual I have poured out my thoughts upon the beauty and excellence of the Scriptures. You will however excuse me, as you will see that I could not well pass over the sacred poets when calling your attention to others. I think indeed, as I read what I have written, that I have said enough to lead you to feel the great influence of poetry in the formation of character; and of poetry as one of the fine arts I will write in my next.

With much love, your friend,

M. STANLEY.

LETTER XXVII.

MY DEAR MISS STANLEY:

Our prayer-meeting on Saturday was very interesting and solemn. There were seven of us that had agreed to meet, but two others came, both of them Sabbath-school teachers, though not professedly pious. There was no disposition to decline taking a part in the meeting; and our lesson for Sabbath-school, which was the first eleven verses of the third chapter of the Acts, furnished a theme upon which we had an interesting conversation.

In the reading of your letter yesterday, a very serious attention was manifested. In the conversation that followed, the obligation of Christians to avoid even the appearance of evil was spoken of with much feeling. The responsibility that rests upon each one in the formation of her own character, seemed to be a subject to which but little thought had before been given. Miss Noble appeared much moved, though she said nothing. When I began to read the comparison between Milton and Byron, I could discover a look of displeasure on

the countenances of some, but there was nothing expressed after I had finished. I thought perhaps Byron might have been a favorite author. Miss Kelsey said that she should after this be more particular in her selection of books; while Miss Prince remarked, that if it is a matter of so much importance what one reads, it was strange she had never heard something said of it before.

It never occurred to me that poetry has so much greater influence upon the mind than prose; and yet I know if any thing is put in rhyme or poetical measure, we are not likely to forget it. Every one remembers the little ditty about the number of days in a month. I think I have read that in the early ages laws were promulgated in verse, and that Homer was a wandering minstrel, going around singing his own verses, the people remembering them; and thus they were preserved, though his poems were not collected into a book until long after his time.

It is so hard to expel wrong thoughts from the mind, that I am sure we ought not to read such an author as Byron. His Hebrew Melodies are beautiful; and ideas of an evil character, expressed in such poetry, must make an im-

pression not easily removed. I think I must read Milton's *Paradise Lost*. I never became much interested in it at school, I suppose because my mind was not sufficiently cultivated to enable me to enter into his sublime and beautiful thoughts.

It was not necessary to make an apology for writing so much about the Bible. We were all delighted with the part of your letter in which you brought the sacred volume before us, and sought to impress us with the beauty of the different writers. I think we shall all read the books of the prophets more than we have done. I am reading the Bible through in course, and several others have commenced. I could not help thinking what a difference there must be between the soul of a novel-reader, and of one who is in the habit of carefully reading the word of God. What a contrast in the thoughts that find an entrance into the mind, the scenes that pass in review, moving the feelings, and giving exercise to the imagination. I shall not after this, I am sure, read any thing without considering whether it will have a right influence in forming my character.

Your

MARIA.

LETTER XXVIII.

MY DEAR MARIA :

I believe I promised in this letter to speak of poetry as a source of pleasure ; but I would like first to allude to the wonderful nature with which we are endowed. Man, formed "from the dust of the ground" by the breath of the Almighty, was made a "living soul." The earth, the air, and the water had been peopled with their various inhabitants, each species adapted to the element in which it was placed, and thus capable of receiving pleasure ; but man, the last great work of the divine Creator, although made with a corporeal nature like the brute, was endued with a spiritual existence, and thus allied to the angelic throng before the throne of God. Hence, though surrounded by the various tribes of the animal creation, he was alone ; having an ability to rise above the pleasures of sense, and find his delight in communion with the Author of his being. By the fall, though he lost the moral likeness of God, yet reason is still his distinguishing attribute, and thus he is enabled to explore the wonders of the visible universe, to enter the world of

mind, to trace effects to causes, and to rise to the great First Cause of all. He therefore is not only susceptible of sensual pleasures, but finds his highest enjoyment in those things which are spiritual and unseen. In view of this, we may well exclaim,

“How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
How complicate, how wonderful is man!”

By this double nature, considering him a creature of sense and a spiritual being, we may account for the variety of character that continually presents itself. Let his lower nature rule, his pleasure be sought in the gratification of his animal propensities, and he sinks to a level with the herds of the stall; but let him cultivate his higher nature, and feast his soul with spiritual dainties, how lofty the height to which he soars, how vast the conceptions that fill his mind, how exalted his sources of enjoyment! Even in the exercise of the senses, there is in man an amazing superiority over the brute creation; for while beings destitute of reason are susceptible of mere animal gratification, to him by the eye and the ear is opened a wide field of intellectual delight and avenues of pleasure, by which his character is elevated and refined.

I might dwell on the superiority of man as a rational and moral being, but I wish now more particularly to direct your attention to his ability for receiving pleasure, and to speak of these higher powers as connected with the sensitive, or of the æsthetic part of our nature. In this connection, I may remind you of the variety and abundance of objects that, to the person of cultivated mind, are sources of enjoyment.

“Not a breeze

Flies o'er the meadow, not a cloud imbibes
The setting sun's effulgence, not a strain
From all the tenants of the warbling shade
Ascends, but whence his bosom can partake
Fresh pleasure unproved.”

“For him the spring

Distils her dews, and from the silken gem
Its lucid leaves unfolds ; for him the hand
Of autumn tinges every fertile branch
With blooming gold, and blushes like the morn.”

Thus an infinitely beneficent Creator has made

“All nature beauty to the eye and music to the ear.”

Is one weary and worn with toil and care?
Let him survey the varied beauties of the landscape ; let him listen to the lulling music of the waterfall, or the sweet strains of the songsters of the grove ; how is he refreshed, and what delightful emotions fill his soul. Nor does the influence cease when the cause is removed :

“For the attentive mind ,
By this harmonious action on her powers,
Becomes herself harmonious.”

In beholding the order of the varied objects of creation, a kindred order is produced within; and thus,

“The tempered powers
Refine at length, and every passion wears
A chaster, milder, more attractive mien.”

Nor is it from the objects of nature alone that man is capable of receiving pleasure. So wonderfully formed, endued with genius as well as taste, by this creative energy he is enabled to produce imitations and symbolical representations that fill the soul with delight. Here we are introduced to a consideration of the fine arts, or those arts the design of which is to give pleasure, as sculpture, architecture, painting, poetry, and music, the last three occupying a prominent place. Poetry, you perceive, is one of these sources of enjoyment to a person of cultivated mind. Not only in itself, but combined with music, it furnishes a pleasure elevated and refining, filling the soul with delightful emotions.

It is by the exercise of the higher powers that we become susceptible of these pleasures of taste, capable of receiving delight from scenes

in nature beautiful and sublime, or from representations of these scenes; "for the rational soul, not the animal, can be touched with beauty and roused by sublimity." The mind in vigorous exercise catches the sentiment expressed by the visions and voices that meet the eye and the ear, and thus has access to sources of pleasure unknown to those whose enjoyment is derived from mere animal gratification.

It is not therefore surprising that the ignorant and sensual feel little interest in the finest productions of human genius, and that the amusements they most relish are frivolous, or such as excite and gratify the animal nature. How little charm to a devotee of sensual pleasure in views of natural scenery, such, for instance, as the splendor of the starry heavens, the delicate shades in the evening sky as the great orb of day sinks to rest, the verdant carpet on which he walks, where flowers are scattered in rich profusion, the rivulet dancing over its pebbly bottom and winding its way through the deepening green of the rich meadows. Man is formed capable of enjoying scenes like these, if he cultivate the higher powers which his Creator has bestowed upon him; but if he live merely for the gratification of his animal na-

ture, his pleasures are scarcely higher than those of animals destitute of reason.

The poet is one who is feelingly alive to all the beauties of nature and of art. "We might all be poets," says Carlyle, "if we could see deep enough;" for beauty is everywhere, and when it is perceived, the soul is so attuned to harmony that the language flows in mellifluous strains. The imagination, under the influence of this tide of emotion, culls the beautiful objects that everywhere meet the view, and combines them into scenes and images that fill the beholder with delight. There is a sweet sympathy among those who feel these emotions, and hence an increased pleasure in the interchange of the social affections. Thus, by the cultivation of this higher nature, the feelings are refined, and the sphere of human enjoyment enlarged and elevated.

Again, as all our powers are improved by exercise, familiarity with beautiful scenes in nature, or the representations of these scenes in the fine arts, must increase the power of receiving pleasure. Reading poetry then, or descriptions by one under the influence of this gushing tide of emotion, his conceptions of the beautiful and sublime so vivid that he traces, in

measured numbers, "thoughts that breathe and words that burn"—this must move the feelings of the reader, and introduce him to a sphere of the highest enjoyment. Poetry therefore, being one of the varied sources of delight which lie open to a cultivated mind, I would suggest to the ladies of your circle, that they avail themselves of their opportunity to quaff rich draughts from this fountain of pleasure. They will thus enjoy a recreation by which the mind will be refreshed and invigorated, and enabled to engage with renewed ardor in life's varied labors and duties.

I have spoken particularly of one of the fine arts, poetry, because upon this you requested my thoughts; but an attention to any of these arts will furnish a pleasure grateful to a person of delicate sensibility, and an improved understanding. The taste is thus refined, asperity of manners softened, social feelings strengthened, and the sources of enjoyment much enlarged. It is also to me an interesting thought, that from the sympathy between the æsthetic and moral nature of man, a correct taste considers nothing beautiful that is not pure.

Your sincere friend, M. S.

LETTER XXIX.

MY DEAR MISS STANLEY :

I cannot well express the pleasure your letter afforded me. I have received so many new ideas, and have so much to say in reply, that I hardly know where to begin.

I am sure I never realized what a wonderful nature is this with which we are endowed. As often as I have read the history of the creation, I never saw such a great difference in the formation of man and brutes. Animals were created, and made to live; but into man the Almighty breathed the breath of life, and he became a living soul. It was the breath of the Creator that gave him this elevation of character, and made him an immortal being. Dr. Young says,

“What strange extremes are centred in his make !
An heir of glory, a frail child of dust ;
Helpless immortal, insect infinite ;
A worm, a god !”

“How passing wonder” that Being by whom he is so “fearfully and wonderfully made.”

It is indeed easy, when we consider the two-fold nature of man, to account for the difference

discoverable in human character. The savage and the philosopher—how great the contrast! It is education which makes the difference, or the cultivation of the higher nature instead of the lower. What a contrast also there sometimes is among those who have the same advantages; some giving themselves up to an indulgence in sensual pleasures, while others are earnestly engaged in searching into the great principles of truth, by which the mind is elevated and enlarged. I can recollect those distinguished for intellectual and moral attainments, and the undivided attention they gave to the discussion of important subjects; while, in the same class, there would be others who took no interest in the recitation, showing very plainly by the expression of the countenance, and by their conversation at intervals, that their thoughts were occupied with some frivolous kind of fun, or the anticipation of a favorite scheme of selfish gratification. I remember girls who left school because they could have “better things to eat at home;” at least this is what they said, thus proving what they regarded as of most consequence. Those parents who send boxes of cake, candy, and other delicious things to their children, are helping

them to cultivate their lower nature, while they place quite an obstacle in the way of advances of a more elevated character. Also those who bring up their little ones so that from infancy they are devoted to dress and exciting pleasures, are surely hindering their mental improvement.

The amusements most relished must be an index of the character, for thus we can discover whether the sensual or the spiritual nature is most fully developed. I do not think a person of lofty conceptions and refined taste could enjoy indelicate, vulgar, or frivolous recreations. The conversation too must be a pretty certain mark to judge by; for those who are most interested in talking about dress and ornaments, their admirers, and the compliments they have received, cannot have any great strength of intellect or elevation of mind, though they may be in the Senior class, or may even have graduated.

A thought that you used often to impress upon us seems now so full of truth, that I wonder I have not been more sensible of it before. It is this, that education is our own work; that teachers and parents are helpers, but that no one can perform the labor for us. I see plainly

the impossibility of acquiring intellectual superiority unless one exercises her own mind, and overcomes the difficulties she meets by her own efforts. I hope, although I have left school, and no longer pursue a systematic course of study, that I shall make it a daily business to cultivate my spiritual nature, growing wiser and better as life wears away.

We were all delighted with your thoughts on poetry, and quite convinced that, to a person of cultivated mind, it must be a great source of pleasure to explore these creations of genius. The tendency of this branch of the fine arts to improve the taste, and to furnish elevated enjoyment, seemed rather a new idea to some; I suppose because it had received so little attention.

Those quotations that you gave us were beautiful. I knew the first was from Young, and having found it, I read some pages in that part of the book. The other I could not find, and I wish you would tell us the author. "Night Thoughts" furnished the reading for the rest of the afternoon, as the ladies were so much pleased with it, that they preferred to put aside what had been selected. Miss Macy was our reader, and she performed her

part so well that it added greatly to our pleasure.

After reading what Dr. Young says on conversation, we had an amusing time. We concluded that if "thoughts shut up" were in danger of spoiling, we would pour ours out to the sun as fast as we could, though some were afraid their thoughts would "come forth dross," and not gold. However, it was the general decision that if "speech ventilates our intellectual fire," and "burnishes our mental magazine," we had better exercise our conversational powers, and thus increase the number and force of our ideas. I am sure the reading of such poetry as that of Dr. Young affords both improvement and delight, and we all realized it to be a recreation of an elevated character.

I perceive from your letter that you approve of attending to the ornamental branches, but I had always supposed you thought that in this way a good deal of time was wasted. Do you think a person's taste can be cultivated without attending to some one or more of the fine arts?

We hardly knew what to think of your last suggestion, that nothing is beautiful unless it is pure. If you mean moral beauty, I think I

understand you, for no one, I suppose, sees any real beauty in vice. There are, however, some poets who have written what is universally admired, and who yet were much given to low and sensual pleasures; as, for instance, Robert Burns and Tom Moore. Miss Macy's idea was, that indulgence in vice does not destroy the taste; and that beauty can be perceived in external objects, or in what is really beautiful, while the person sees that in himself from which he can receive no pleasure. My thought was, that with our depraved hearts we are prone to call good evil, and evil good; and therefore, that what is really evil in the sight of God, may to some appear beautiful. Thus ambition has been considered noble, and pride praiseworthy; but whatever is regarded as evil cannot be admired.

I have somewhere met with this remark: "True refinement of mind is always attended with a perception and love of fitness and propriety, as well as of beauty and sublimity." There may be beauty and sublimity in the soul or higher nature, as well as in external objects. "Genius," I recollect I once learned, "is moral sublimity; love, compassion, and other virtues, moral beauty; and the perfection of goodness

or beauty, and of greatness or sublimity, in the highest degree of which we can conceive, is exhibited in the character of the supreme Being."

I have written you a longer letter than usual, but I am indebted to you for many of the thoughts.

Your

MARIA.

LETTER XXX.

MY DEAR MARIA:

In my last I intended to have spoken more particularly of an ornamental education. I approve of as much attention to the fine arts as may be without encroaching upon the time that should be devoted to the solid branches, or as is consistent with the circumstances of the person. The pecuniary means must give some direction to the course that should be pursued. Some parents can afford to send their daughters to a seminary for years, others but for a few quarters. It is absurd for one who knows she can spend but a few months at school, to attempt what it would take years to acquire. The wise course would be to attend to that which is most necessary and useful. Reading, writing, and spelling, are accomplishments every one should possess, but in which many, who have spent much time upon the ornamental branches, are very deficient.

It should be kept in mind, that the practical purpose for which most females acquire a knowledge of the fine arts is, to furnish them with

recreations agreeable and refined, and not to prepare them for the business of life. The object in the education of woman should be kept in view—to fit her for the sphere which she must occupy as daughter, sister, wife, mother, and mistress of a family—a teacher in every station, but not an artist. An attention to the ornamental branches should not therefore interfere with the acquisition of those necessary to strengthen the reasoning powers, and to fit her for the performance of the duties of her station in life; still, as the fine arts tend to the improvement of the taste, by the exercise of which she can render home attractive, giving a charm to its quiet scenes, it is not well that they should be neglected. All her powers must be cultivated, that she may have a well-balanced mind; and that she may be fitted to brighten her home on earth, as well as prepared for a blessed home in heaven, her whole character must be imbued with the influence of the gospel.

In deciding to which of the fine arts the attention should be given, the one most congenial or most suitable, considering the circumstances of the person, should be selected. Much time is wasted by young ladies in at-

tempting to acquire that for which they have no natural ability, and from which they derive so little pleasure that it is soon laid aside. This is unwise ; but as many have no other guide than the course pursued by others, a branch most fashionable is selected as the one which the young lady must be taught, although, as the teacher very soon discovers, it is the one that she never will learn.

I have had pupils who could not read understandingly to themselves, nor intelligibly to others, devoting a large portion of the short period they were at school to an attempt to learn instrumental music ; of course gaining nothing by it in any respect beneficial to themselves or others.

You realize how desirable an accomplishment good reading is in your circle, of which you had an illustration in Miss Macy's reading of Young. I wish this was more common ; but in a large circle it is sometimes difficult to find one who feels competent, or who is really competent, to read so as to give pleasure to those who listen. The fact that many think more of being able to drum on the piano than to read and spell correctly, has, I presume, led me to speak of learning this ornamental branch

in such a manner that you thought I disapproved of it. I certainly think it a waste of time and money for some to take lessons in music. If the time thus consumed were spent in hard study, or if the money paid for the instrument and the lessons were used to enable the pupil to remain at school, it would produce a great change for the better in the education of our sex.

Similar results are seen in attempts at drawing. A young lady is required to take lessons, as it is thought important for her to have all the fashionable accomplishments; but she has little perception of beauty, and no skill in imitation; her figures therefore are awkward and clumsy, and her tints and shading miserable. This must be the case, unless the teacher perform the work, while it passes for that of the pupil. This is often done, either to avoid the dissatisfaction of the parents, or from an unwillingness that such performances should leave one's school.

From what I have written, I would not have you infer that I think little of these ornamental arts. They furnish recreation adapted to refresh and exhilarate a cultivated mind, and they should take the place of amusements

that are trifling and injurious to the character.

The use of the pencil is an accomplishment very desirable to be attained. To sketch beautiful scenes, and to trace the forms and shading true to nature, is a source of great pleasure, and has a refining influence upon the mind. It is an amusement that can be enjoyed in retirement, or when deprived of social intercourse. And not only the productions of the pencil, but ornamental work performed by the needle improves the taste, and increases the attractions of home.

Music is a heavenly art, and by its influence the soul is refreshed, exhilarated, and lifted above the grovelling things of earth. How is the toil-worn husband or father cheered when, at the close of the day, he is greeted by the sweet minstrelsy of the loved ones, whose profession it is to study household good; and what joy lights up their souls as, ere they bow before the mercy-seat, they unite in a song of praise and thanksgiving to the bounteous Giver of all the blessings they enjoy. My experience leads me to judge that a knowledge of vocal music is of more importance than of instrumental. The voice seems indispensable

in pouring forth the gushing emotions of the soul, though its power is increased by an instrument. There is great delight in the expression of these emotions; and in listening, one seems to drink in the soul-stirring strains, and hearts blend one with the other in delightful unison. To chant the simple lay with those whose feelings mingle with our own, gives sweet pleasure; but to join with the great congregation in the solemn hymn of praise, affords a more elevated joy, and seems to bear us to the very gates of heaven.

I have observed that those who are accustomed to sing with an instrument seem quite unable to unite in vocal music without this accompaniment, probably because they do not become independent singers; and it seems to me, if this is a necessary consequence, they had better accustom themselves to use the vocal organs without its aid.

While on this subject, I would remind you of the danger of having the mind dissipated by songs that are low and foolish. We cannot be too careful to avoid this influence, for there is great power in music and poetry combined. We should not read prose that gives us wrong thoughts, much less poetry; but especially

should we beware of low ideas brought into the mind under the combined influence of poetry and music.

Here I would notice a common error among Christians. It seems to be an opinion, that in the choice of recreations one's own inclination may be followed, without regard to the influence on others, or even on one's self. Why do you indulge in that amusement? we inquire of one. Simply because it pleases me, is with many an all-sufficient reason. Suppose it is urged that its influence is not good; the reply is, "It does not do me any harm." This, however, is said apparently without thought of its effect upon one's self or others. But the rule of the apostle is, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;" and this evidently in reference to what are sources of enjoyment. When scenes of pleasure open before us, how clearly is it our duty to inquire whether in this indulgence we act for the glory of God, and whether by this means we shall become so much refreshed as to increase our power of doing good.

Is one invited to a fashionable assembly? What reason induces her to accept the invitation? Is it because her physical, intellectual,

or moral powers will thus be invigorated, rendering her better fitted for the discharge of duty; or that her social and benevolent feelings will be strengthened, and she thus be led to take a deeper interest in promoting the happiness of others? Is the principle that regulates the decision, the desire to promote the good of her fellow-beings and the glory of her divine Redeemer? Those accustomed to accept such invitations are the persons to reply.

It is our duty to cultivate the habit of social intercourse, not only in the home circle, but in the neighborhood or community in which we reside. I was pleased with a little piece which I saw not long since on parties. The idea advanced was, that they should be "more frequent, but less expensive." The directions, however, are all so good, that I must quote it for the benefit of yourself and your circle:

"The company should assemble early in the evening, and disperse early, allowing time for family duties and a full night's rest. They should embrace the aged and the young in the same assemblage. They should be such that true Christians could be there with a good conscience. They should not be very large, and the amusements should combine improvement

in something valuable, with the hilarity which contributes to health and happiness."

If the people of God realized their obligations in regard to amusements, and that they have a duty to perform in devising such recreations as are beneficial as well as agreeable, I think there would be a great change in the character of society. Christians have too long left this for the world to direct; and while some have seen the inconsistency of mingling in fashionable assemblies, others have entered into the plans devised by the gay, giving as a reason what is really true, that we are social beings, and that some kind of recreation is necessary.

Fashionable parties do not tend to promote social intercourse, and they check the progress of intellectual and religious improvement. The late hours, great display, and manner of spending the time, render it inconsistent for Christians to give countenance to these scenes of vanity and dissipation. Social pleasures without these attending evils should be encouraged.

Your reading circle is an instance of one of the methods by which these pleasures can be enjoyed without any evil results. Sewing societies for benevolent purposes are another;

and I think these social meetings might be rendered more improving, if there could be reading during portions of the time, if not for the whole afternoon. A higher tone would thus be given to the conversation, and gossip, talking of one's neighbors and discussing the faults of servants, might be prevented. The object for which persons are employing their needles should be well understood, and every such circle might be a "society for inquiry" in regard to what is being done for the benefit of the world.

In a village where I am acquainted, on the evening after the sewing society, there is what is called a sociable. The members of the society, as well as others, meet at some place which is designated, the minister and other gentlemen being present, and the season is spent in a social manner. There are certain regulations, as that each one shall deposit a small sum to promote the benevolent object for which they are engaged; that there shall be no refreshments, and that the company shall retire at a seasonable hour; the evening being invariably closed with prayer. A happy influence is thus exerted. There is social enjoyment among persons of different sexes, ages, and conditions

in life, without the evils attending fashionable parties; the cause of benevolence is promoted, and God is honored.

I had thought of some suggestions on gardening, a branch of the fine arts accessible to almost all; a source of pleasure that may be enjoyed in some degree even by those who are in poverty, for the poor seamstress who has not one foot of ground may yet have roses blooming in her window. Every woman may enjoy this pleasure; her dwelling may be embowered in flowers, and rendered paradisiacal by those beautiful objects that delight the taste and ravish the senses.

I have a friend, a widow with poor health and small pecuniary means, whose dwelling, a home of refinement and love, is embosomed in flowers of her own rearing. Her tiny yard, so tastefully adorned, blooms from the opening spring till the frosts of autumn; and then her dwelling shelters the tender exotics, which cheer by their fragrance and beauty through the bleak and stormy days of winter. This continual bloom is an apt emblem of her deeds of love, and of her truly Christian spirit, which seeks to bless all who come within the sphere of her influence.

No one of the fine arts has a happier tendency, more refines the mind and improves the taste, than the cultivation of flowers. "It promotes health, and calls into exercise the best feelings of our nature. This widow, without a knowledge of music, painting, or any other of the fine arts than gardening, is more distinguished for delicacy and refinement than many who have spent years in acquiring an ornamental education. We may therefore infer, that for the improvement of the taste, it is not necessary to attend to a particular branch of the fine arts, or one that happens to be most fashionable; but that by a simple means all may cultivate this power of receiving pleasure, and thus have a recreation which is at once delicate and exhilarating. Though one cannot make the canvas glow with life and beauty, nor by a touch shake out a "treasure of sweet sounds" from many a "trembling chord," yet nature is to her full of music; and beautiful objects, everywhere scattered in rich profusion, delight the eye. From these the person of cultivated mind may cull those that most please the taste, and imagination may combine them so as to form one beauteous whole, "disposing well the gay diversities of leaf and flower;" thus show-

ing that the grace the garden exhibits is the "creature of a polished mind." What a charm may thus be thrown around the spot to all most dear; and what place more delightful, where, with "friends, books, her garden, and perhaps her pen," one may possess sources of enjoyment pure and ennobling.

This refinement of feeling so happily adapted to increase our social pleasures, may be exhibited in all the departments of life, and by ten thousand little acts of love may render this transitory state a period bright and joyous. Taste, as the handmaid of religion, or moved by a spirit of love, sprinkles the pathway with flowers, and adds to the pleasure of all who come within her influence. However humble the cottage, this nice perception of beauty can be seen in the neatness and orderly arrangement of the various articles essential to household comfort, as well as in the dress and manners; not in the profusion and display of rich furniture and ornamental attire, but in a chaste and beautiful simplicity, and a nice attention to what is congruous and proper. A woman of correct taste is not decked with a profusion of ornaments, nor does she follow fashions that are inconsistent with true delicacy. Even the

tones of her voice and the movements of her body, as well as the expression of her countenance, evince the benevolence of her heart and her desire that others may be happy. There is no affectation of gentility, a species of politeness put on in company and laid aside at home, but an exhibition of the genuine spirit of kindness at all times and in all places, and towards persons of all ranks and conditions in life.

Studying to render every thing agreeable to those with whom we are associated, increases the social feelings; and our Creator has so formed us, that in blessing others we ourselves are blessed. Those who seek only to please themselves, are themselves most ignorant of enjoyment. Many are the methods of beautifying one's home, and of increasing the sources of pleasure in this dear spot, but it is love that gives brightness to the scene. Whatever has a tendency to refine the feelings and bring into exercise the social affections, is happy in its influence. The world is full of beauty, and from the different kingdoms of nature, as well as from the creations of human genius, objects pleasing to the taste may be selected to adorn the spot to all most dear.

A friend of mine residing in a city has in this way added much to the pleasure of his family as well as his own enjoyment. He has a little greenhouse with a choice collection of exotics; and in addition to the flowers, which charm by their beauty and fragrance, there is an aquarium well supplied with various specimens of the finny tribe, which, by their easy and continual motion gliding through their native element, furnish a spectacle so agreeable, that one hardly tires of gazing upon it. At the same time a little fountain scatters a tiny shower, while the sweet warbling of the canaries heightens the enjoyment, and one is led to feel a mingling of delightful emotions. There is a soothing and cheerful influence produced by these varied sources of pleasure, furnishing a recreation to those who are wearied with toil and care, as well as to the gay and light-hearted children. As the character receives an impress from scenes with which one is familiar, such a collection of beautiful objects has a tendency to refine the mind, soothe the passions, and increase the social affections. How great the contrast between such pleasures and those of display and parade, which, giving exercise to vanity and rivalry, produce a spirit

of discontent, of contention, and a disregard for the rights and happiness of others.

How happy the home in which love ever presides, and how happy those who are ministering spirits to the dear ones with whom they are pursuing the journey of life; not forgetting to care for those less highly favored than themselves, while with hearts of gratitude they receive all these blessings as gifts from their heavenly Father's hand. They may be "poor perhaps, compared with those whose mansions glitter in their sight," yet "as they look abroad upon the varied field of nature," all the delightful scenery is theirs to enjoy, and with it a heart of grateful love.

"Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise, that has survived the fall;
Thou art the nurse of virtue; in thine arms
She smiles, appearing, as in truth she is,
Heaven-born, and destined to the skies again."

The inmates of such a home, if indeed the children of God, not only have here much to enjoy, they are ravished with glimpses of their heavenly home, that city with "gates of pearl" and "streets of gold," and its light the "glory of God." They love to think of this blissful abode where there is no more sin, and where they shall meet the loved ones who have gone

before ; where they shall unite with all the redeemed in a ceaseless song of praise to Him who has purchased their salvation with his own blood, and where He who is their "hope of heaven below," will for ever be "the glory of their heaven above." That we, dear Maria, may there meet, prays.

Your affectionate

M. S.

P. S. The quotation for which you inquire is in Akenside's Pleasures of the Imagination.

LETTER XXXI.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

As usual your letter furnishes me with many thoughts which it is pleasant to arrange and fix in my mind. I feel more and more the importance of what you have sought to impress on me, that we know nothing as we ought to know, without reflection.

Your remarks about the waste of time in learning music occasioned quite a little excitement in our circle. "How true that is," was echoed round the room. Some indeed blushed, saying, "How much time I have thus lost." Miss Dole said she knew a young lady who, after taking lessons two years, could only play "Little Bo-peep."

There is an equal absurdity too in some girls attempting the use of the pencil, for it would seem even more impossible, without taste, to learn painting than music. I could not help thinking of the young lady who purchased a piece executed by one of her companions, and took it home as her own work.

We were delighted with your remarks upon

the cultivation of flowers. I had studied the chapter in Kames on Gardening, still I never thought about its being one of the fine arts; but when I reflect, I see the propriety of its being so considered, for it is the selection and arrangement of beautiful objects with the design to please or to gratify the taste. I have taken great pleasure in the cultivation of flowers, but I have never had any exotics. I should like to be acquainted with that friend of yours who has such delight in gardening as well as in doing good. I should also take pleasure in being introduced to that beautiful greenhouse and aquarium. I believe all our circle resolved to engage in the cultivation of flowers. I think we shall be quite inexcusable if we do not beautify our homes, not externally alone, but that in the order and beauty everywhere seen, our taste and industry should be apparent; while our cheerful countenances, kind words, and obliging actions, produce a continual sunshine.

Miss Wilcox requested that the reading circle might meet at her father's next week, as she has some geraniums and roses in bloom that she is sure it will give us pleasure to see in this cold and blustering season. She also

promised slips to those who are ready to engage at once in the culture of plants. You perceive therefore that your suggestions receive immediate attention. I hope we shall be as ready to cultivate a cheerful and kind disposition as to cultivate flowers, that thus we may diffuse around us a bright and cheering influence. We had a very pleasant conversation on this subject. In addition to your letter, we read the chapter in Mrs. Ellis' "Daughters of England," on "Taste, Tact, and Observation." I recollected being delighted with this chapter when you referred us to it in the Practical Knowledge Class, and particularly with her remarks upon taste as the handmaid of religion, or under the influence of the law of love. You used to tell us that if the taste is not cultivated when young, it is impossible to efface the coarseness which will be in the character; and that there will always seem in such a person a lack of refinement and delicacy. I should think, if parents were aware of this, they would be particular in regard to the companions with whom their children associate, and the habits which they form when young. What a happy world would this be if, as God requires, love and not selfishness were the ruling principle of

action—supreme love to God, and love to our neighbor as ourselves.

A remark of Mrs. Ellis seems very striking: that as the affections in woman are stronger than in man, when her love is not drawn out towards others, she expends it all on herself, her selfishness thus becoming very prominent. This may help us to account for the fact, that when a woman is noted for wickedness, she seems to be more depraved than a man the most degraded and vile. How important that we cultivate right affections, and form such a character as will render us blessings to the world in which we live, and that we use our exalted privileges and the talents we possess, in doing good to our fellow-beings, and in promoting the glory of our divine Redeemer.

We have come to this resolution in our reading circle: that at each meeting we will have a report of the one preceding, of what we read, what was the subject of your letter, what thoughts were suggested by the reading, or what remarks were made in the conversation that followed, and that we will take turns alphabetically in writing these reports. This is a good introduction to the writing of essays,

and a paper. I presume in due time these desirable results will follow. Composition, I think, seems much less of a hydra than it did. We have all had our abstract-books some time, to which we frequently refer in our conversations. We now dare to talk about writing for the circle, and I have consented to read the letters I write to you. I shall begin with this.

Miss M—— was quite surprised that her reading was noticed with so much approbation. She seemed to have had no thought that it was any thing more than common. We told her that was one reason why it was so pleasant to hear her read; it was evident she had no idea of exhibiting herself. I think good reading a fine accomplishment, and there is as much beauty in the tones of the voice and clearness of enunciation, as in the proper emphasis and cadence.

I have been thinking that, with a world so full of beauty, and with so many avenues to pleasure as a benevolent Creator has opened to us, how inconsistent it is to devise methods of amusement which are a hinderance to our intellectual and moral development—methods which lead to a violation of His righteous commands, and a contempt of his offers of love. We may look abroad upon the varied

field of nature, and taste the sweets that are everywhere strewed around us. We may select objects that delight the taste, and embellish the spot to us most dear. With the pencil we may transfer scenes sketched by masters of art, and with them may adorn our homes. We may behold the varied exhibitions of human genius. We may listen to the sweet harmonies of nature; and as "there is in souls a sympathy with sound, some chord in unison with what we hear may be touched within us," and the soul be filled with delight. We may become acquainted with the divine art of music, and not only listen, but unite in swelling melodious strains. With the poet too, whose heart is ravished by these beautiful sights and sounds, and who pours forth his deep-gushing emotions in measured numbers and with soul-stirring pathos, we can hold converse, and with him drink in large draughts of joy.

Your remarks upon our accountability to God for the manner in which we spend our hours of relaxation, were affecting to us all. We know that we must give an account to God for all our thoughts, words, and deeds; and yet how little we think of it. That in our amusements we should act for the glory of

God and for the good of our fellow-beings, as well as for our own pleasure, seems not to enter the mind. I think with you, that good people do not sufficiently consider what amusements are proper and right. I believe some young people receive the impression that their Christian friends look upon all amusements as wicked; and I do not know but they sometimes have reason for this idea. That quotation about parties is admirable, showing just what they should be; and such scenes of social intercourse would be delightful. I think our reading circle a fine recreation. We do not desire any other, and dancing parties have quite died away here, as almost all the young ladies are members of our circle. As you say, it seems to me sewing societies should be reading societies, or societies for inquiry. This would render them a means of improvement as well as of pleasure. I wish you would tell me what you think of writing poetry. Some of our circle also wish me to ask you to give your thoughts on games of chance.

Your own

MARIA.

LETTER XXXII.

MY DEAR MARIA:

Much satisfaction do I receive in becoming acquainted with the progress you are making in your reading circle. For this there are two reasons: your own advancement in what affords profit and delight, and the hope that others may be induced by your example to engage in this means of enjoyment. How exceedingly desirable that associations of a similar character should take the place of assemblies where the time is given up to dancing or foolish plays until a late hour in the night, and when, if there is conversation, the topics that most interest the company are the faults and failings of their neighbors, or the all-absorbing themes of dress and fashion. A great saving of expenditure might thus be attained, a matter of some importance, especially if the money thus saved could be applied to the relief of the distressed. This reminds me of your efforts for the poor, and I would like to inquire in what benevolent purpose you are now engaged.

You ask, dear Maria, what I think of trying to write poetry. I have been anticipating this question, as it is suggested by a consideration of the fine arts. I can very readily reply, that I do not think it well to try to record scanty thoughts in rhyme; but the course I should advise is, to seek to increase their richness and variety, and then to express them in a manner most easy and natural. That one may write with force and beauty, the mind must be stored with knowledge, and the emotions brought into vigorous action. The more deeply one feels, the more easy and flowing is the expression.

Carlyle says, "A vein of poetry exists in the hearts of all men," and poetry he calls "musical thought." "The heart of nature being everywhere music, if we see deep enough, we shall see musically;" that is, we shall reach the "melody that in every thing lies hidden." Again he says, "It is only when the soul is rapt with her true passion of melody, and there is greatness, depth, and music in the thoughts, that one has a right to rhyme." This is what is sometimes termed a "divine afflatus," when "the soul enters into a freer, mightier, more intense life; the reason clear, the imagination

all alive with bold and beautiful imagery, and glorious words come sparkling, leaping, thundering forth." This state of mind cannot, however, be imitated or assumed; it must be felt. A person possessing this power would be termed a genius, and thought to be moved by a sort of inspiration.

"At thy magic touch, the rough marble gleams
 Into ecstatic shapes, and breathes and lives;
 'Tis thou whom the artist's waking dreams
 The light of glory to the canvas gives;
 The poet too doth catch thy sparkling glow,
 And strews with stars our darksome path below."

In reading this stanza, how many heroes of the fine arts are brought before us. Raphael, Mozart, Milton, and a host of others keenly alive to the beautiful and sublime, impress these qualities in living colors on all their works; multiplying and combining those objects that delight the taste, and brightening man's pathway through this world of time. All do not, it is certain, possess this wonderful creative power. If any one sees deep enough, he would thus be moved; but as there is a diversity in the objects that give pleasure to taste, various would be the creations of those who feel this lofty inspiration. At the touch of Phidias, the marble seems almost to breathe;

Raphael makes the canvas glow with life; while Jenny Lind, with her nightingale strains, thrills the soul with ecstasy; and Milton enables you to "alight amid the silver streams, the cooling shades, the ambrosial air of Paradise, and to see what this world would be were it not marred and clouded and blighted by sin."

This ability to excel in some particular branch of the fine arts exhibits itself sometimes even in childhood; as of Pope it is said, "He lisped in numbers, for the numbers came;" and Benjamin West, when a mere boy, executed such a picture of his little sister sleeping in her cradle, that his mother wept, and pressing him to her heart gave him the kiss which he says made him a painter. Even with little education some, as Amelia Welby, are distinguished for their poetic effusions. Of Mrs. Welby it is said, "Her melodies seemed the outgoings of her own nature, her song a simple melody, learned of the trill of the brooklet, the rustle of the leaves, or the deep solemn murmur of the ocean." Still, it is true that eminence is not often attained but by culture and education. Homer and Shakspeare, although the greatest names in literature ancient and mod-

ern, furnish no argument against the importance of education, as they are exceptions, and what they might have been with superior advantages we cannot divine. Jenny Lind, so illustrious an instance of musical genius, would probably never have been world-renowned for her power of song, but for her thorough training in this science. You have heard it remarked, I presume, that those who are slow to learn sometimes attain the greater eminence. This is often true of authorship as well as acquiring a knowledge of the sciences; for those who apply themselves closely to the art of expressing their thoughts, as well as to the cultivation of their mental powers, often excel indolent ones, though these may have exhibited more genius in their first efforts. The mind strengthened by exercise, becomes enlarged; there is a greater grasp of thought, and the soul is moved by the grand and beautiful images there impressed. As scenes in nature are elevating and refining, so exhibitions of genius have a corresponding influence, and arouse deep-gushing emotions, that are poured forth in strains beautiful and pathetic.

There is a great work then to be performed. We must know, that we may feel; we must

bring into action the exalted powers with which we are endowed; we must grasp the treasures strewed everywhere in the world of mind—must catch the living sentiment in sense and sounds, and thus commune with the world without and the world within; and more than this, we may catch the sentiment of the supernatural, and everywhere read the uttered feelings of the infinite Creator of all things. The perfections of the Deity are impressèd upon all his works, and thus in adoring love our souls may be raised above this world, and our communion be with “Him in whom all fulness dwells.”

The mind thus enriched and disciplined, all the powers are in active operation. “Attention fixes itself upon finished pictures in the conception, and memory brings her treasured resources. Association by one idea suggests others, while abstraction marks the essential differences, and examines each one singly. The mind turns back upon the passing train of thought, and by reflection attains a more complete conception; while the judgment compares these ideas, distinguishes between the real and the counterfeit, and infers new truths from premises already known. The imagina-

tion aroused, glances from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth, and bodies forth the form of things unknown." Reason inspires the love of truth, and reads the deep secrets of nature, while the æsthetic emotions, warmed into action by the insight of reason, respond in sympathy, and we feel the spirit within us kindred to that which is glowing all around us. Like the diamond, "genius refracts and reflects the light it receives from other minds, and arranges ideas thus furnished so that the light of truth falls upon them with added lustre." With such a mind the language will be enriched with beautiful imagery, and will naturally flow in poetic measures, and be kindled with poetic fire.

Now, dear Maria, is this an answer to your question? I think I see you smile, and I imagine you are thinking I have more than answered it. However, I believe you are pleased with the reply, and are impressed with the importance of attaining these higher accomplishments. Although a great work, the means for its performance lie open before you, but "there is no royal road" to its attainment; efforts earnest and intense alone insure success. The gewgaws of fashion and of fancy must not absorb the attention; the mind must be closely

exercised, and trained to high and noble employments; even the amusements must be such as are suited to a rational being, and in accordance with the dictates of an enlightened conscience. Our correspondence, I hope, has a happy influence in expanding your mind, increasing your thoughts, and in giving you facility of expression. Letter writing is an accomplishment very desirable to be attained, but it must not be idle gossip, like that often indulged in conversation.

Your reading circle will also aid you in this advancement, so long as you read books of a high moral and intellectual character. By carefully perusing authors of distinguished excellence, your own mind will become stored with the richest treasures of thought, and you can hold a sort of communion with the gifted intellects of all ages.

The book of nature too lies open before you, and the more you study it the more will your mind be imbued with its beauty and sublimity. By a familiar acquaintance with the works of the great Author of all things, not only is the taste refined, but the soul is elevated and led from nature up to nature's God, the great Source of all perfection.

"The heavens declare the glory of God," and in all the objects of the visible creation we discover his wisdom, power, and love; but by his blessed word we are introduced into the very presence-chamber of this infinitely glorious Being, are ravished with a foretaste of such things as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," "prepared for them that love Him," and are made acquainted with the wonderful method by which poor sinners can be transformed into his likeness, and inherit his glory. How are our souls exalted as we commune with prophets and apostles, and as we unite with them in ascriptions of praise and thanksgiving to the Triune God.

Your friends it seems request my thoughts upon games of chance, but this I must defer till my next.

Your affectionate friend,

M. S.

ETTER XXXIII.

MY DEAR FRIEND :

Your letter was more than an answer to my question, but I was delighted with your suggestions respecting the means by which the mind may be enriched, and an advancement made towards that lofty height which our infinitely benevolent Creator has made us capable of attaining.

After the reading of your letter to our circle of ladies, no one spoke for some minutes, while every countenance expressed deep feeling. Miss Cady was the first to break the silence by saying, "What a great work we have to perform; or as I should say, it is our privilege to perform;" and says Miss Noble, "How thankful we ought to be to this dear friend, who has shown us the folly and sinfulness of giving ourselves up to trifling amusements, and has put us in the way of cultivating our higher powers."

To this Miss Macy added, "How thankful to Him who has endowed us with such exalted powers, and although we have abused them,

and used them for our own selfish gratification, who has given us this friend to remind us of our obligations."

"But," says Miss Dole, "have we all consecrated ourselves to the service of this divine Being; and are we moved in all that we do by a desire to promote his glory?"

This last inquiry seemed to produce a deep solemnity. We have reason to believe that the Spirit of God is striving with many of our number. Our prayer-meeting last Saturday evening was very solemn, and all of our circle were present. Miss Macy and Miss Dole have both expressed a hope of having become Christians. You will remember us in your petitions at the throne of grace, and will join with us in ascriptions of praise for the merer drops that have fallen among us. What a glorious period this in which we live. I trust we are permitted to share in the blessing so abundantly poured out in various parts of our land. The morning prayer-meeting is held in our church, and attended by persons belonging to all the different denominations. The meetings are deeply solemn and interesting.

You wished me to tell you in what benevolent purpose we are now engaged in our read-

ing circle, and what we have been doing. We made the clothes for the children whom I mentioned in a former letter, and then we concluded to divide the village into as many portions as we had members in our reading circle; and at that time there were eight of us. Each one of us then took the part of the village assigned her, and by visiting and inquiring, ascertained the wants of those most needy. Cases of great poverty we made known to those who had charge of money raised for the relief of the poor, and others were relieved by their neighbors. The part we took upon ourselves to perform was, to make clothes for the children that we could induce to go to Sabbath-school and to church. We furnished materials, and made many dresses and other garments. I do not certainly know how many have been thus induced to attend Sabbath-school and church, but quite a large number. Some of the parents too we helped to Sunday clothes, by soliciting the aid of others. Each young lady still continues to look after her children, and to ascertain whether they are constant in their attendance at the school they entered.

After we had completed this work, finding we could sew as well as not while listening to

the reading, we consulted our minister in regard to the object in which he thought we had better engage. He mentioned a home missionary, an acquaintance of his with a large family, who he thought would be very glad of our assistance. He said he would write to him and ascertain his wants, and the ages of his children, so that we could work to better advantage. He said also, he would mention the object in which we were engaged to some of the merchants in the village, and solicit from them a donation of materials for the clothes we should make. This has been done, and we have now ascertained from our minister, that there are eight children under seventeen years of age, three boys and five girls. We are now upon these clothes, and you cannot think how much pleasure we take in the work. We shall have a nice box full, as many things are contributed besides what we make, some for father and mother, as well as for the children. We are all so young that we have not had much to do with sewing societies, but I think we shall prove that there can be reading while people are at work, and that there is no difficulty about hearing what is read. We give a garment to each one to make, and she prepares

the work at home, so that there is no need of talking about it in our meetings. I think we shall make a bedquilt out of our pieces, and then we will have a quilting. We are also knitting stockings for the children.

The plan I mentioned of having a report of each meeting, meets with great approbation. Miss Ash read her report yesterday. She gave us a fine account of your letter, which shows she must have paid close attention to the reading. Then she gave a sketch of what we read, and also of our conversation during the afternoon.

After the reading of the report, something very unexpected occurred. Miss Sill modestly suggested, that she had written some thoughts on the "Influence of Natural Scenery upon Character." We thanked her for the effort, and begged her to read it. She did so, and I assure you it was beautiful.

After the reading of this piece, we discussed the plan of having a paper, and came to the conclusion that it was time to commence the effort. We decided to call it "The Wreath," and the old motto was just the thing for us: "Twine around thy brow the unfading Wreath of intelligence and virtue." How many asso-

ciations are suggested by this motto. We appointed Miss Doty the first editor. I think some of us will endeavor to ascertain whether our thoughts will flow in measured numbers, as our paper would hardly be complete without a poetical embellishment. Whether our report should have a place in the paper was discussed, and decided in the negative. We have recently had several new members; our number is now sixteen. We were greatly pleased with Miss Wilcox's flowers; and we read at that meeting from Akenside's "Pleasures of the Imagination." How beautiful this poem. I think it must have inspired Miss Sill to write her essay on the "Influence of Natural Scenery."

The reading circle meets next week at our house. I wish you could be with us.

Your own

MARIA.

LETTER XXXIV.

MY DEAR MARIA :

Your letters, my dear girl, increase in interest. Greatly do I rejoice in the evidence that the Holy Spirit is moving upon the hearts of that dear circle of young ladies with whom you are associated. I hope soon to be gladdened by the intelligence, that all have found the Saviour, and have consecrated themselves to his service. My heart will be with you in your Saturday prayer-meeting, and will unite in your petitions at the mercy-seat, and in praise and thanksgiving for the abounding grace of a covenant-keeping God.

In your reading circle, you are making that a matter of fact which has for years been my beau-ideal; but I have not been as successful in carrying out my own schemes, as you have been in yours. I can now see why this is. I have attempted too much at first, forgetful that there is in the mind an indisposition to put forth an effort, where the performance is deemed impossible. As one becomes conscious of power and an interest in the work, there is

a willingness to attempt the accomplishment. You must however bear in mind, that perseverance and industry will be necessary in sustaining your paper, and in giving it such a character as will be worthy of your circle. If your members are united in the effort, you will certainly succeed.

You must not suffer yourselves to be so much absorbed in your literary pursuits, as to permit them to interfere with other necessary employments. Duties never really clash, although this sometimes seems to be the case; but it is because too much at one time is attempted, or becoming so much engaged with one occupation, we are unwilling to leave it when something else requires attention. A dilatory spirit often brings one into this seeming difficulty, by inducing a habit of procrastination, instead of nerving one's self to the immediate performance of duty. Much ease in the accomplishment of business is attained by promptness in commencing and energy in executing.

As you are now situated, these literary pursuits are your pastime, and they must not of course interfere with your domestic duties; but time can be found for each, by denying

yourself a little of the morning's repose, and by fixing the mind upon a topic for composition while the hands are engaged in some employment.

It is important for a woman to acquire the habit of attending to literary pursuits, without neglecting the duties that belong to her station in life. It can be done even by those who have little assistance in their domestic cares. An illustration to the point I can give from our family history. My great-grandmother was the wife of a farmer in moderate circumstances, and always did her own work. She had six children, whom she trained up so that they became useful men and women; and yet without interfering with any of her duties, she found time not only for reading, but for writing. While engaged in her various employments during the day, her mind was busy in putting her thoughts together on some definite subject; and after her children were in bed, these ideas were committed to paper. Thus, upon her death at an advanced age, her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren found themselves in the possession of a treasure more valuable than money. I have a piece of poetry written by her at the age of eighty-

five. May you, dear Maria, live as useful and happy a life, and may your pathway, like hers, shine "brighter and brighter to the perfect day."

Your ladies will excuse this piece of family history. It seemed so much to the point, that I could not well omit it. I am pleased to know what you have done for the children of the village, and also with the object in which you are now engaged.

We should rejoice in finding opportunities to advance the cause of the Redeemer. Instead of complaining of the many calls upon our benevolence, we should seek out opportunities of doing good, and be ready to give not only labor, but money; and this can be done by denying ourselves little indulgences for Christ's sake.

Then, in the kind of work in which you are engaged, there is a benefit to yourselves; for you are acquiring the habit of expertness with the needle, and in fitting and making garments, an art which belongs to the province of woman.

But you will begin to think I have quite forgotten the request of your ladies, that I would give my thoughts on games of chance as an

amusement. I have not forgotten it; but I have found so many other things to say, that I have put off writing on this subject. In truth, it seems a great descent to come to this from the interesting points which have lately occupied our attention.

To look on and see persons engaged in this amusement seems enough to convince one of its childishness, and to awaken a marvel that grown-up people can engage in any thing that is so entirely a waste of time, and a relaxation by no means calculated to restore the energies of mind or body.

As I have been situated, I have seen very little of such amusements, and I presume I have no idea how commonly they are practised as a pastime. Not long since, being for several days on board a steamer, I was both surprised and shocked at the number of persons of both sexes who were engaged in this method of passing away time. It was difficult to find a place, out of my state-room, where I could be free from the annoyance of card-players.

I suppose it is true that woman, in the vice of gambling, as well as in that of drunkenness, is less deeply involved than the other sex; for a female gambler seems to be something unusual.

But as in drinking ardent spirits it has been found necessary that woman should come to the rescue, not merely pledging herself to abstain from drunkenness, but to take the pledge of total abstinence ; so, in games of chance, it is evidently her duty to abstain not merely from gambling, but from all games of chance as an amusement.

But the question with many is, whether these games are wrong except as they lead to gambling. In deciding this point, it is necessary to consider what renders an amusement injurious, or how we are to judge between one that is useful and one that is hurtful. We have discussed this subject so much, that I presume what I shall say would suggest itself to you ; still I will repeat some things. An amusement so fascinating, or producing so great an excitement, that there is danger of its being indulged beyond the bounds of reason, leading one to neglect business or to intrude upon the hours of repose, is not safe. To be beneficial, it should refresh and invigorate ; but if so absorbing as to produce an indisposition or an inability for other efforts, the effect is not good. No amusements can be innocent that cause the commission of sin ; and games of chance lead

to a great waste of time, and often excite feelings contrary to the divine requirements.

There are indeed games, as checkers, marbles, and backgammon, that many professors of religion consider a recreation by no means objectionable, and by their example young persons are encouraged to give themselves up to these fascinating plays. The transition from these to cards is very slight, and a game of whist is regarded by many as equally innocent; this is becoming more and more common. Professors of religion are thus influencing the young to enter upon a dangerous course, from which no good can be gained, and which may lead to the destruction of the soul. Can they, in pursuing this course, be following Christ, and denying themselves for his sake? Gambling is condemned, but that which leads to it is approved and practised. To me this seems an inconsistency, and I am not alone in this opinion.

Mr. Green, a reformed gambler, who has done much good by his exposures of this vice, and his correct views on the subject, compares the permitting of children to amuse themselves with the games commonly considered innocent, to furnishing them with false keys. These keys, he supposes, will give them access to

great treasures; they may be used or not, but how great is the danger that one whose heart is prone to evil will yield to this temptation. "What security have we," says Mr. Green, "that a man furnished with these keys would not steal, should a good opportunity offer itself?" What should we think of a parent who would permit his child to become initiated into the art of picking locks; or who would give him a clue to the means used by rogues and scoundrels to rob their fellow-beings? Is this a useful kind of knowledge? Then is putting the implements of a gambler into the hands of children safe? Is initiating them into these games training them up in the way they should go? Is it the way in which the parents wish them to go?

So great is the fascination of amusements of this character, that there is no consciousness of the amount of time thus frittered away, the absolute waste of golden moments. Although the professed object is recreation, yet they lead to a neglect of exercise, and have a less tendency to refresh the mind than many other methods of relaxation. The attention is kept intent upon that which in itself is of no consequence, the changes that must be made to win

the game. There can be no conversation; nothing is heard except bursts of exultation at success, or of anger and chagrin at defeat.

There are, however, games that depend upon skill, of a character less injurious, as for instance, chess. This is said to discipline the mind as much as the study of mathematics. There are also various kinds of plays requiring skill, very useful for exercise and pleasant as amusements, as ninepins, shuttlecock, graces, and others. No betting, however small the sum, should be allowed in these plays; and indeed the expression "I'll bet" should never be used. It has an evil origin, and, to say the least, is vulgar.

It is most certainly the duty of our sex, to set their faces against an approach to this class of amusements, and seek to deter children, as well as others over whom they have influence, from engaging in pastimes of this character.

With much love, your friend,

M. STANLEY.

LETTER XXXV.

MY DEAR MISS STANLEY:

The ladies of our circle desire me to present their united thanks for the views you have given of the subject upon which they requested you to write. Many of them had felt greatly at a loss what course should be pursued in regard to games usually considered innocent. Backgammon and checkers are very common in many families here, and some of our best people often take a game; having no idea, I presume, that it can have any influence in leading others to waste their time, or to give themselves up to excess in amusements of this character.

At our last reading circle, Miss Doty suggested that in her researches for information, she had met with a very interesting historical item, with which she presumed we should all be pleased. It was a resolution passed in Congress soon after the Declaration of Independence, in regard to amusements. It is what I know will be interesting to you, and I quote both the preamble and the resolution:

“Whereas true religion and good morals are the only solid foundation of public liberty and happiness ;

“Resolved, That it be, and hereby is, earnestly recommended to the several states to take the most effectual measures for the encouragement thereof, and for the suppression of theatrical entertainments, horse-racing, gaming, and such other diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of principles and manners.”

How fully this shows the character of those who were the founders of our national institutions, and who purchased our liberty with their blood. Such men saw and felt the fearful influence of gaming and theatrical amusements; and what do not we, as a nation, owe to them?

Miss Macy gave another item that surprised us all very much. I suppose it must be true, as no one would have made it without good authority :

“William Pryne, an author in the reign of Charles I., brings a catalogue of authorities against the stage, containing names of eminence in the heathen world, as well as among Jews and Christians; fifty-four councils, seventy-one fathers, one hundred and fifty Popish

and Protestant authors, the opposition of philosophers and poets, the legislative enactments of pagan and Christian states, magistrates, and councils."

The experience of the world, it would seem, pagan, Jewish, and Christian, has decided the theatre to be a school of vice; and can it be that, in this most enlightened age, the theatre should be patronized by those who profess to be followers of Christ?

One or two other items I have gleaned, which I will give you:

"If our Lord's exposition of the seventh commandment be correct, the assembly-room is no place for Christian morals; for the costume has the effect that Montesquieu ascribes to Spartan virgins, to strip chastity itself of modesty."

"If the word of God be the standard of morality, then the whole mass of plays must be condemned, and with them the whole system of the play-house."

We were pleased with your hints in regard to the duties of woman; and that we must not neglect household good, nor let literary pursuits interfere with our domestic employments. I know you wish us to be true women, filling

the sphere which Providence requires us to occupy. We assure you of our thanks, and of our determination, like your great-grandmother, to attend to intellectual pursuits without interfering with any one of the varied obligations incumbent upon us in the little domain over which we are called to preside. By the comforts we dispense, and the happy influence we diffuse around us, we would each of us endeavor to be the light of our homes.

Your own

MARIA.

LETTER XXXVI.

MY DEAR MARIA :

Your letter was unusually interesting. Any progress which you or your companions make is to me a source of enjoyment, and I am glad that you understand even my hints so well.

It is evident that from your reading much improvement is derived. The facts and reflections which you have gleaned show that your minds are actively engaged, and that you readily discover what has a bearing upon the subject which you are engaged in investigating.

I was greatly interested in the illustrations you give of the manner in which amusements about which we have been writing have been regarded by the wise and good. You have discovered that not only the religious portion of the community, but rulers, statesmen, and philosophers, have seen and felt the theatre to be a school of vice, not to be tolerated by any one who has the soul of a patriot. In our own beloved land, under the influence of the gospel, its founders many of them men of God and bold in the defence of the truth, how noble

the stand taken against these soul-destroying schemes. Strange it is that any one who receives the Bible as the standard of morality, can be induced to be present where there is danger of beholding scenes so vile, and hearing language so corrupt that "chastity itself seems stripped of modesty." How can those who are "renewed in the spirit of their minds," whose treasure and whose hearts are in heaven, relish scenes so opposite to holy employments, scenes that fill the mind with thoughts vain, worldly, and sensual, and that lead to a violation of the requirements of that divine Friend for whom they profess a love supreme.

While reading your letter, I was led to the thought that amusements may be considered under two aspects: as a cause of the character of individuals or nations, and as a result of the character possessed. Grecian history furnishes an illustration of this. The Greeks were ingenious, brave, and fired with a love of glory, and their amusements were such as would be relished by such a people; while at the same time the tendency of the contests at those games, which were to them an all-absorbing pastime, was to render them a nation of heroes, and by the exhibition of the fine arts, to in-

spire genius and encourage artists. As a natural result, Greece became the home of poetry, painting, and song, as well as renowned for her military prowess. A want of moral purity is also discoverable, which certainly was not lessened by the manner in which these exercises were performed, each competitor appearing before the assembled thousands in a state of entire nudity. No woman indeed was permitted to appear on the Olympian plain, yet certain it is that this practice was sustained by her influence, as victors in these games were those whom all delighted to honor. Here I would remind you of woman's power in giving character to a nation. "As the moon of nature controls the mighty tides of the ocean, so does woman sway and regulate the mighty surging sea of human passion." That which she tolerates, or to which she gives the seal of her approbation, is honorable; while that upon which she frowns, meets rebuke and scorn from the other sex.

The love of glory was a ruling passion with Grecian heroes. This is seen in the self-denying, earnest efforts to gain the laurel crown on the field of Olympia, as well as in the prowess of a Leonidas or a Miltiades on the field of

battle. In Sparta this love of glory was so powerful in its influence, that even the strongest tie of nature, a mother's love, seemed to give place to this all-absorbing passion. Fully is this illustrated by the direction of the mother to her son: "Return with your shield, or upon it;" and again, in an assembly of matrons, where we behold the mothers of the living clad in the deepest mourning, while those whose sons have fallen on the field of battle are in bright array, evincing their joy by strains of glad exultation. Thus mothers, more than military commanders, made the Spartan armies invincible. In like manner, Spartan huntresses and Athenian hetærae impressed an unchaste influence upon the Grecian character.

In our time woman's aid has been found necessary to stay the progress of intemperance; and decidedly should she take her stand against all those amusements that corrupt the character, and that allure from the path of virtue. How great her obligation, that the power she wields should be on the side of truth and righteousness. Vice should meet her withering frown, while with earnest efforts she should seek to restore the wretched wanderer.

The influence of amusements upon the national character may also be learned by looking at Rome in the days of her glory. Here we perceive what fearful scenes will become a pastime, if woman but give to them the sanction of her presence.

You will recollect that among the Romans under the consular government dancing went into disrepute. Instead of this, an amusement marked with savage fierceness, though in accordance with the spirit of a people who delighted in war, became the engrossing source of pleasure. This was gladiatorial combats. Wild beasts and men were the actors. A spacious arena was the field for contest, and a dense mass of congregated thousands gazed upon their fierce encounters and deadly struggles. In the Grecian games it was deemed an honor to bear a part; not so in these combats at Rome, though sometimes Romans of the patrician rank, and even the emperor himself, as, for instance, Commodus, were actors on this bloody field. The gladiators or men trained for these conflicts were slaves, or captives taken in war; and were compelled to engage in these sports to give pleasure to the sons and daughters of imperial Rome, the proud mistress

of the world. Malefactors, and those doomed to death, here met a bloody end. Thus many a Christian, even the tender and delicate woman who loved the Saviour, was torn in pieces by the furious beast, for the amusement of the crowd—like Perpetua, who, though implored by her pagan father and husband to save her life by renouncing her religion, rather than deny her blessed Saviour, suffered this cruel death.

The influence of these sports upon the national character was unlike that of the Grecian games. In Greece every man aspired to the honor of being an actor on the Olympian plain; and the self-denying regimen practised by those who prepared themselves for the contest fitted them to act the part of heroes in struggling for the defence of their country; while the scenes displayed on this field of glory fired each one with a desire to wear the victor's crown. The combats of gladiators had no such influence; but caused the spectators to delight in scenes of blood, and to be amused with sights revolting to the better feelings of the soul. The Colosseum, which still stands a monument of Roman greatness, is also a monument of Roman shame; for it carries one back to the days when this mighty edifice was thronged with

Roman citizens, with warriors and statesmen, wives, mothers, and maidens, even the emperor himself there, all finding their pleasure in the contests and dying struggles not only of wild beasts, but of their fellow-men. So much did this pleasure-loving people delight in this amusement, that one of the greatest favors that could be conferred was to prolong the opportunity for witnessing these combats. Thus the emperor Trajan, in celebrating his triumph, feasted the Romans for four months with these bloody sports.

At the same time a blessed influence was pervading this mighty empire. The Son of God had made his advent into this world of sin and death, and the glad news of salvation had been proclaimed not only in Rome, but through the length and breadth of all the lands that were under her sway. Many had embraced the blessed offer of salvation, confessed Christ before men, and followed him, though it led to prison and to a bloody death. Earnestly did these self-denying followers of the Redeemer labor to spread a religion which brings "peace on earth, good-will to men;" much did they mourn over these abominations, and fervently did they pray that that kingdom might come,

which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" still the wide-spread arena was drenched with human gore, and drew together its thousands.

The influence of this blessed gospel had produced a mighty transformation even in the palace of the Cæsars. Already had the emperor Constantine declared himself on the side of these persecuted ones, and proclaimed Christianity the religion of the empire. Theodosius the Great had also taken his stand with those who worship the true and living God; pagan temples and idols had been overthrown, and the followers of Christ, so long despised and oppressed, were elevated to places of trust and power, and clothed in robes of state. Still this barbarous amusement, this disgrace to Christian Rome, was not abolished. The amphitheatre was thronged with its thousands, and men and brutes poured out their lifeblood there. On one such day a congregated mass might have been seen intently gazing upon the arena, where stand two fierce and stalwart combatants ready for the fearful onset. The imperial purple graces the scene, for the emperor Honorius is himself present.

Let us now survey an assembly of a far

different character in a remote part of this mighty emporium. In a narrow and secluded street is a house dedicated to the worship of the true God. A little band of Christians have here met together, and earnestly are they pleading with their Father in heaven in behalf of this guilty city. Now they pray, that for the glory of his own great name, he would overthrow the devices of Satan, and cause this abominable sport to cease. The emperor is remembered in this prayer; earnestly do they supplicate for him strength to decree righteous decrees, and that, fearing not the face of man, but fearing God, he may put an end to this fearful sin. They rise from their knees and commune together; they earnestly desire that the heart of this people may be turned to God, and thus be led to renounce the service of Satan. All in this little praying assembly are affected, in view of their obligation to do what they can; but one is more deeply moved than the others. He declares that something can be done, that he will make an effort, and that God will be with him. For this he has left his home, he has come from the land where for guilty man the Saviour laid down his life. Far off among the mountains of Judea he had

heard of this sin of Christian Rome; he had heard of the thousands delighting in these scenes of blood and death; and praying that he might be an instrument in ending this disgraceful, this wicked amusement, he has sought the imperial city. Amazed at his words, all seek to dissuade him from making any effort, each one assuring him that nothing can be done but to pray, and to keep aloof from this scene of iniquity. But his purpose is fixed, and he leaves this place of prayer alone; his heart resting on God, and going out in earnest supplication that for Jesus' sake he might be directed and strengthened in performing the great work.

As he approaches the arena there is a movement among the crowd of spectators, for by his dress a Christian monk is recognized. An expression of surprise is visible, that he, one of these praying men, should be present at a gladiatorial combat. But not long is he the object of attention, for the actors are engaged in the deadly struggle, and the multitude are gazing upon them with fiendish joy.

Suddenly a burst of indignation peals from the maddened throng; for see, that Christian has thrown himself between the combatants,

earnestly striving to appease their rage, and to terminate this mortal conflict.

The emperor looks on with approbation, but the infuriated spectators rush upon the intruder. Overpowered and crushed by many blows, he falls; but, bloody and dying, at the royal command he is borne into the presence of Honorius. And now, confusion being hushed, the emperor addresses the assembled multitude, thus declaring, "In the presence of this murdered saint, this holy and expiring martyr, I make my fixed and irrevocable decree, and abolish for ever the combats of gladiators, the disgrace of Christian Rome."

This was the last gladiatorial combat; and the Christian monk Telemachus was the honored instrument in causing this fierce and bloody amusement to cease. God was his helper, and he accomplished the work, though, like Samson, the victory was purchased with his life, and he fell with his enemies.

It was considered a great inconsistency for one who had embraced the religion of Christ to be present at a gladiatorial combat, even a denial of the Saviour; and if the stage is the masterpiece of all the devices of the great enemy of souls, and the dancing party an introduction

to his service, should a Christian ever be seen at these places of amusement?

To follow Christ implies that we should do nothing that he would not do; that we should visit no place, engage in no business or pleasure, upon which we cannot implore his blessing; in short, that the same mind be found in us which was in him; for "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." May we not hope that the influences of the Holy Spirit, so abundantly poured out upon our land, will produce a change; and that instead of conforming to the world, the people of God with one accord will separate themselves from the sins which so much abound. Young Christians should not excuse themselves for indulgence in sinful amusements because they have known older professors of religion engage in them. They may thus go astray from God, and bring darkness into their own souls; they may dishonor the cause of the Redeemer, and cause the enemy to blaspheme His holy name.

Dear Maria, I must bring my long letter to a close, hoping that you and your friends may be interested and profited by it.

Yours with love,

M. STANLEY.

LETTER XXXVII.

MY DEAR FRIEND :

Your letter was full of the deepest interest. I had given it two careful perusals before the meeting of the reading circle, and then I read it again; and the conversation that followed the more deeply impressed its contents upon our minds.

How thrilling the story of Telemachus, and how wonderful the result of his efforts. God did hear his prayers, and the prayers of those Christians who had met together to sigh and cry over the abominations done in the midst of them. The emperor received strength for the performance of a duty, from which doubtless he felt like shrinking. This poor monk from the mountains of Judea seems to have been raised up and enabled to accomplish what no other man dared to attempt.

While reading your letter my mind was impressed by your idea that the approbation of our sex, or the sanction given by their presence, is necessary to render an amusement popular. What a responsibility then rests upon

woman; and how inconsistent that with all her refined sensibility she should encourage diversions which have any tendency to pollution, cruelty, and vice. How plainly the depravity of the heart appears, when she seems willing that the affections which belong to her nature should be deadened by the overpowering influence of a desire for self-gratification. As woman was first in the transgression, it would seem that when she rejects the Saviour, she still continues the leader in the path to ruin. Yet "she has this honor, that the Incarnate One was the woman's seed," and when she espouses the cause of the Redeemer, and her heart glows with love to him, great is her influence in bringing others to "drink of the water of life." "Piety is indeed the brightest jewel in her crown." May it be said of each of us, as of Mary of old, "She hath done what she could;" and like those devoted women who were "last at the cross, and earliest at the tomb," may we stand up for Christ, fearless of the reproach and scorn of a wicked and gain-saying world.

It is I suppose true, that many more of our sex than of the other are members of the church of Christ. I know the infidel sneers at this

fact, and declares this religion only fit for women and children; but his conscience must condemn him for admitting the thought. I have no doubt that, when alone, he shudders in view of an eternity without the favor of God; and gladly would he have the hopes and consolations of the Christian on the bed of death. The infidel Allen dared not commend his own belief to his dying daughter; but when she turned to him, earnestly asking in whose faith she should die, in his or in her mother's, he replied, "Your mother's, child."

I recollect the account of the martyr Perpetua, and that she was implored by her pagan father and husband, for the sake of the babe that clung to her breast, to deny her Saviour, and to declare her belief in the gods of Rome; but love to Jesus enabled her to resist their entreaties, and she was taken from prison to a bloody death. Enclosed in a net, she was tossed by a wild bull until her bodily sufferings were ended, and she received an abundant entrance into a world of glory. What a change to her from earth to heaven!

How different the condition of Christians at that time from what it is at present. Religion now walks in "silver slippers," and the great

cross to be taken up when entering upon the service of Christ, is relinquishing one's self-gratification, or incurring reproach by not conforming to the extravagances and frivolities of fashionable life. If martyrs were only performing their duty when they suffered fearful tortures rather than deny their Saviour, how can we be his true followers, if we do not renounce the vanities of the world for the sake of this blessed Friend? To give up all for Christ must certainly mean, practising some self-denial.

The course pursued by Lady Huntingdon, and the great good she accomplished, is it not an illustration of this entire consecration to God? What a contrast between a professor of religion who in a year expends a thousand dollars to adorn her person, and this noble lady, who devoted her princely fortune to purposes of Christian benevolence, allowing herself each year but one new dress. It is not often that in a large assembly of persons of the highest rank one is distinguished, as was this eminent woman, by what a nobleman was pleased to call a "shabby dress;" nor indeed by such an encomium on her character as was given in reply by the king: "I should think

myself happy to be able to lay hold on that robe when she ascends to heaven."

Can a devotion to the demands of fashion, a living for self-gratification, be in accordance with the requirement of our Saviour: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me?" It seems to me we cannot be too earnest in seeking to know wherein we ought to deny ourselves, or too firm in resisting temptation. Engaging in fashionable amusements does not fit one for the communion-table, for secret devotion, or for the family altar. I do not think any one, after a night spent in these frivolous and exciting scenes, can draw near to her Father in heaven, and enjoy his presence.

I must not forget to give you an account of our reading circle last Thursday. You know we were to have the first number of our "Wreath." Miss Doty was present in very good season. Her paper filled six sheets, and was beautifully written. First we had our report, quite a composition, by Miss Brace. We had read two of your first letters at our last meeting, and she gave quite a sketch of them. Then Miss Doty read her paper. She opened with an editorial, in which she gave an account of

our circle from the commencement, of our present condition, and the design of our paper. The next piece was poetry, by one of our number; then a dialogue, "Scenes in Jerusalem in the time of our Saviour." There were two essays: one, "What is man?" and the other, "Friendship the wine of life." There was a playful sketch of the trials of a poor house-keeper, with various items of interest interspersed, and a fine editorial address at the close. Miss Macy is our next editor, and I am to write the next report. I do not think we shall have any difficulty in sustaining our paper.

Your own

MARIA.

LETTER XXXVIII.

MY DEAR MARIA :

In perusing your letter, my heart was full of joy as I read your clear and correct views of duty; and I can truly say, if I have been instrumental in leading you to take this stand, "to God be all the glory." I was delighted with the account which you gave of your paper, and hope you will continue to sustain it with interest and ability. Both the report and the paper will add greatly to the pleasure of your reading circle.

That the amusements in which persons delight indicate the character, needs no argument. Our intercourse with the world renders this point self-evident. These recreations are called pleasures, because in this manner pleasurable feelings are excited; and being the voluntary expression, they must of course show plainly the state of the heart. They are social, and a similarity of taste is therefore necessary in order that persons may enjoy them together. We see this everywhere. In a happy domestic circle, though the employ-

ments may be various, there is sympathy in every joy and every sorrow ; but there can certainly be little happiness in that home whose inmates must separate to find their enjoyment. Dissimilarity of taste is undoubtedly one great hinderance to domestic felicity. When a follower of Jesus is united to a person who has no relish for the pure and elevating joys of a Christian, how can there be the full enjoyment of this sweetest source of earthly bliss? To a person of true refinement, how uncongenial are pleasures low and vulgar ; how impossible for the ignorant and sensual to share the joys of the intellectual and spiritual-minded ; still more impossible must it be for a person of a heavenly mind to relish the frivolous pleasures of a scene of vain amusement.

The study of the New Testament shows plainly that whatever tends to promote rivalry, pride, vanity, impurity, and deception, is inimical to the spirit of the gospel ; so also whatever leads to irreverence and a supreme devotion to one's self, putting God out of the thoughts : all these must be abhorrent to one whose heart is in heaven. That Christian parents should permit any thing with such a tendency to be practised in their houses, or

that they should suffer their children to acquire a taste for pastimes having this evil influence, seems altogether inconsistent with their obligations to God, and to these loved ones committed to their charge. I know that children of pious parents do engage in such recreations. I know too, that professors of religion themselves sometimes play cards, attend dancing parties, the theatre, and the opera; but I am sure those do not who are unwilling to engage in any thing upon which they cannot ask the blessing of God. The following incident illustrates this:

A minister in New England, when travelling, not being able to reach a public-house, called at a private dwelling, and requested permission to spend the night. He was hospitably received and entertained. After the supper was removed, a pack of cards was produced, and the stranger invited to join in the amusement. "With all my heart," said he, "if you will first permit me to do one thing." With eager curiosity it was asked what this might be. He replied seriously, "Implore the blessing of God upon the game." To this of course there was no reply; for there is, even to the thoughtless pleasure-seeker, an incongruity in seeking the blessing of God upon a

vain amusement. The good man, finding all were silent, proceeded, "I am a minister of the gospel of Christ, and in whatever employment I engage, it is my privilege to seek the blessing of God." Upon this the gentleman put away his cards, and proposed to invite the neighbors, and have a religious meeting. To this the clergyman assented, and the evening was spent in an interesting and profitable manner. Here we find a good test for any thing in which we propose to engage, to seek for the divine blessing in its performance; and how can one dare to enter upon any business or pleasure in which he may not hope for the favor of the infinite Ruler of all things?

God promises blessings to descend upon children's children; but it is to those who "keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them." The command is, "Train up a child in the way he should go;" and the promise, "when he is old he will not depart from it." If the acquisition of fashionable accomplishments interferes with this obligation, how plain is the duty of a Christian parent. But children, in this important matter, too often pursue the course which accords with their own inclinations.

I am induced to suggest this subject to those who are yet young, that they may feel the importance of becoming fitted to discharge the obligations that may one day devolve upon them. With all the advantages now enjoyed by our sex, still as a general thing they do not receive sufficient instruction to fit them for their peculiar vocation, nor are they trained up with reference to the duties which in a few years they will be expected to perform.

The inventions in labor-saving machinery have exonerated woman from many kinds of employment which formerly occupied the time and attention of our sex. The wheel and the loom, former implements of female industry, are now curiosities rarely seen. Still it is true, that with this freedom from labor, and opportunity for improvement, we do not see an advancement commensurate with the advantages enjoyed. Our grandmothers, while their knowledge of the sciences was very limited, their lessons often learned at the spinning-wheel, were many of them more distinguished for discrimination of mind and good common-sense, than women of the present day. They may not have been as brilliant as their more privileged daughters, but they were quite as

efficient in performing the duties belonging to their various stations in life. Not that the increase of advantages opened to our sex is the cause of regret, but that these advantages are not better improved; that the means so bountifully bestowed are not so used as to produce the end so much to be desired. Even the great facilities for obtaining an education, and the few impediments in the way of its attainment, may be one cause of the little advancement that many seem to make. While "impossibility is the death of effort," it is still true that obstacles increase the mental vigor by bringing into exercise all the energies of the soul in surmounting them.

We often hear of self-made men—of men who, contending with poverty and other difficulties, by their own efforts acquire an education. Such persons become distinguished in the world's history, and make the deepest and broadest mark upon the age in which they live. Pages might be filled with the names of those who, despite discouragements the most appalling, have still pressed onward and upward to the highest eminence. We find them occupying stations of commanding influence in the church, the state, the camp, in the field of

scientific research, and in those inventions that have put a new face upon the world.

The same is true of our sex. It is an observation I have often made among my own pupils, that those whose pathway is smoothest often make the least advancement; while those who have many difficulties to encounter become distinguished for their attainments. Mary Lyon here stands forth as an illustrious instance of a self-made woman; and many others there are who, though their names are unknown to fame, by their own earnest efforts have triumphed over obstacles, gained a thorough education, acquired a well-balanced mind, and have filled with eminence the most important stations. True it is, while labor conquers all things, without labor nothing can be accomplished; and one of the saddest features of the present time is, that, among the fashionable class of ladies, labor is deemed inconsistent with gentility. Even in our republican country, those who are the daughters of affluence and not obliged to make an effort, may be found passing a great portion of their time in easy indolence, amusing themselves with a sort of elegant trifling. To dress, and sit in the parlor for company; to make fashionable calls, attend parties or gay

assemblies, perhaps to play the piano, and do fancy needlework, or to perform so literary an employment as the reading of novels, this seems to be the summing up of what they accomplish, having apparently no object in view but their own gratification.

What a character must thus be acquired; and how unfitted to discharge the important duties of a wife, mother, and mistress of a family. How can she who has no thought of any one but self, be devoted to another? How deny herself, when her strongest impulse is self-gratification? How can she who has only lived to be amused think of business; and how direct business to which she is an utter stranger? How can she who has practised no self-control, manage the complicated affairs of her little domain, and train up aright the immortal beings committed to her charge? How can she submit cheerfully to the wishes of another, when she looks upon the world as made only to subserve her wishes?

Ignorance of domestic employments, and a habit of living for one's own pleasure, causes not only many a heart-ache, but other serious and permanent evils. Without a habit of thought and of patient submission, a willing-

ness to set aside one's own preferences, and to attend with alacrity to the numberless little things that promote the comfort of others—when the presiding spirit in a household is destitute of these traits of character, how can there be a happy home? These thoughtless ones, devoted to dress and display, who cannot work, but can spend money, and whose pleasure is found, not in the domestic sphere, but in scenes of vain amusement, by their folly and extravagance drive many a poor man to deeds of desperation, or to a drunkard's grave.

I have recently met a lady answering exactly to this description ; a thoughtless being, who in the five months since her marriage has run her husband as many hundred dollars in debt; who seems to think it impossible to live where she cannot attend the theatre and dancing parties; and who refuses to engage in any kind of domestic employment. She eats and sleeps and lounges, amusing herself with trifling plays. In reply to my inquiry if she was fond of reading, she said, "Nothing but novels;" and she added, "I used to like to read the Bible when a child, but since I have read so many novels I do not like to read the Bible." She professes to dislike all kinds of work, and

seems only intent upon being amused, dressing extravagantly, and having her own way. This is no fancy sketch ; would that it were a solitary instance.

In reading your allusion to the advice of Allen to his daughter, I could not but feel how amazing the responsibility of Christians ; how important that they should so live as to impress the world with the reality of religion. If by their works they deny the solemn professions they have made, how fearful the influence they exert. Who will by their example be impressed with the excellence of true religion, or be led to honor our divine Lord and Master? A consistent living Christian is "the light, the sun of this world, each in his place." "The eye, the face, the gait, the motions, the tone of the voice, as well as the words and actions, have all an expression indicative of the moral character." In all the walks of life an influence is exerted upon those around him. There is a preparation in the nature of all like the plate of the Daguerrean, upon which impressions are indelibly stamped. What an amazing responsibility to live in God's world, and to live for eternity. It is not by noisy bustling efforts that these influences are im-

parted; it is by heart efforts made to the hidden affections that the work is constantly being performed. As the all-powerful orb of day silently delineates the images of objects with more exactness than the finger of art, so the involuntary influence that goes out from each of us, paints pictures on those who stand in our light after the pattern of our own character. If the soul be full of Christ, it cannot be full of the world; and if the spirit of our blessed Lord be within us, its influence will be felt through all the circle in which we move. In the beautiful language of Cowper,

“When one that holds communion with the skies,
Has filled his urn where these pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with earth’s meaner things,
’Tis e’en as if an angel shook his wings;
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
That tells us whence his treasures are supplied.”

Some thoughts of Dr. Dick on the subject of amusements are so much in point that you will, I know, excuse me for quoting them.

“If man were only the creature of a day, whose whole existence was confined within the limits of this sublunary scene, he might amuse himself with facts or fancies, or with any gewgaws that happen to strike his fancy, as he glides down the stream of time to the gulf of

oblivion But if he is a being destined for eternity, the training of his thoughts ought to be directed to objects corresponding to his high destination; and all his amusements blended with those moral and religious instructions which have an ultimate reference to the scene of his immortal existence."

I am happy in being assured that there is one circle of young ladies who are looking at the subject of amusements in the same light as Dr. Dick. May you long be united in your efforts, mutually aiding each other in diffusing a right influence among those with whom you mingle; and may this influence widen and deepen through the length and breadth of this our highly favored land.

If I have been able by my letters to afford you aid in searching for the right way, it is, I assure you, a cause of unfeigned thanksgiving to God, as it has been a source of great enjoyment to

Your affectionate friend,

M. STANLEY.

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